Things Past

Vittoria Colonna
Duchess of Sermoneta

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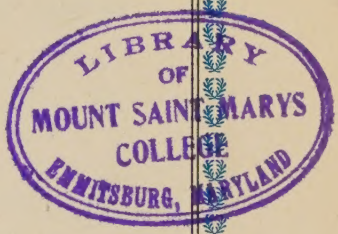
Vittoria Colonna, Duchess of Sermoneta

THINGS PAST

BY

VITTORIA COLONNA
DUCHESS OF SERMONETA

FOREWORD BY
ROBERT HICHENS



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To

ELIZABETH ANNE SIZELAND

"SIZY"

Whose love and loyalty have never failed me

FOREWORD

I HAVE become afraid of memoirs. In these voluble days babes and sucklings who know nothing of life sit down to tell us on paper all about the feelings and events in the lives of babes and sucklings. Insignificant old ladies abound in reminiscence. Elderly Anglo-Indians write big books about how they stuck pigs. Actors and actresses tell of old glories. Opera singers hand themselves a final bouquet. Clergymen take us in the pulpit to share their triumphs over adoring congregations. Ancient lights strike a last match before disappearing into the darkness.

Yes, I am afraid of memoirs. Too often, when reading them, I am reminded of a comment I once heard at a dinner, uttered by a woman who, sitting beside me, had been listening to a discussion on Napoleon between two clever men. She filled an interstice of silence with this remark, spoken in an important voice: "I think there can be no doubt that Napoleon was a very remarkable man."

She, too, is probably at work on her memoirs. I am full of fear.

And yet I am very fond of memoirs. But they must be written with zest by people who have led really interesting lives and who have something worth telling to tell. Among these I can put the writer of this book.

The Duchess of Sermoneta, whom I knew first in Rome when she had not long been married and was Princess of Teano, has certainly known how to live. She might easily

have lived out her years enclosed in an aristocratic prison. There was every temptation for her to do that. She was the reigning beauty of Rome. She was surrounded by aristocratic admirers. No smart party, no great ball, no gala dinner was considered complete without her. Flattery pursued her. The ardent pleasure-lovers, the idle, the rich gossiping do-nothings no doubt for awhile considered her one of them. But she had a good deal more in her than most of them had, as readers of this book will discover for themselves. She had a strong sense of humour which made her secretly laugh at many of the follies that others took seriously. She had a broad feeling for life, which led her very soon beyond the prison gates. And she was altogether too human to be satisfied with the purely aristocratic side of life to which by birth she belonged.

Ever since I have known her she has been an eager seeker after what Americans call the "worth while." She has gone out of her way in search of what really is interesting. No doubt she has been energetic in pleasures. But she has also been energetic in work. Even in Rome in those early days, when she could have filled her days and nights to the brim with amusement and glitter and gaiety, she used to work really hard at her painting. She was genuinely interested in art and literature. She was the friend and helper of the great actress, Duse. She loved what was fine as well as what was gay. She had, too, a strong democratic and sporting side which always refreshed me. And she was, and still is, one of the most fearless people I have known. I doubt if she and fear have a bowing acquaintance.

Some people invariably miss the omnibus. The Duch-

ess of Sermoneta, I am sure, never missed it in her life. Invariably she has caught it even when she has had to sprint for it. An excellent companion she is in every omnibus, in a saloon, in a ballroom, on a journey, in the home counties, in the wilds. And now I can recommend her as a good companion between the covers of a book—of memoirs.

I have found her book full of matter. And it contains, among many good things, one priceless story. Which? The reader must find out which. Whenever I think of it I begin to laugh. The incident happened in England. That is all I can say.

Probably many people are with me in my terror of memoirs. But the Duchess of Sermoneta has reassured me. She has not only led me to the water, she has persuaded me to drink. I hope she will reassure many others. I think she will. She is full of courage for life.

Robert Hichens

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When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought. . . .

SHAKESPEARE
(*Sonnet xxx*)

CHAPTER I

MY LINK WITH ENGLAND

IN the Royal Academy of 1790 Sir Thomas Lawrence exhibited an unusually fine picture of a handsome man with keen dark eyes and powdered hair. It was described in the catalogue as "The Portrait of a Gentleman," and it now adorns the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, where I hope some day to pay my respects to it as representing my great-great-great-grandfather. It is the portrait of William Locke, who paid the artist twenty-five guineas for his work.

William Locke the first—to distinguish him from his son and grandson of the same name—born in 1732, was well known as a wealthy amateur of his day, and formed a fine collection of works of art at Rome, which included the picture of St. Ursula by Claude, now in the National Gallery, and, among other antique marbles, the Discobolus afterwards at Duncombe Park, and the torso of Venus which was in the Duke of Richmond's collection and, after injury by fire, came to the British Museum.

In 1774 he purchased an estate near Mickleham in Surrey, and built Norbury Park. Locke and his wife, Frederika Augusta, daughter of Sir Luke Schaub and goddaughter to Frederick the Great, were well known in the society of their day; and Frances Burney was one of their closest friends.

When the French refugees, Madame de Staël and others, settled at Juniper Hall near Norbury, they were very intimate with the Lockes, who materially assisted

the marriage of M. d'Arblay with Miss Burney, in 1793, by giving them a piece of ground on which their home, Camille Cottage, was built.

Miss Frances Burney refers again and again to the Lockes in her famous *Diary* penned in the flowery English of the day. When she visited King George III and Queen Charlotte in 1784, she spoke of them to their Majesties at great length and recorded all the conversation. The subject was Miss Burney's sister who had been unexpectedly brought to bed at Norbury Park.

"I daresay," said the sweet Queen, "Mrs. Locke was only very happy to have it at her house."

"Indeed, Ma'am, her kindness and Mr. Locke's would make anybody think so, but they are all kindness and goodness."

"I have heard, indeed," said the Queen, "that they are all sensible and amiable and ingenuous in that family."

"They are, indeed!" cried I, "and as exemplary as they are accomplished."

"I have never seen Mrs. Locke," said the King, "since she was that high"—pointing to little Miss Dewes.

"And I," said the Queen, "I have never seen her in my life; but for all that, from what I hear of her I cannot help feeling interested whenever I only hear her name."

A little later on it seems Queen Charlotte proposed Mr. Locke's coming to Windsor to give her a lesson of coloring "the impressions." Miss Burney received this with joy, and continues to record:

I said I was sure my dearest Mrs. Locke would come with him whenever the journey took place.

"To be sure," she said [Queen Charlotte], very sweetly and in a tone of having it taken for granted. She also mentioned her intention of lodging them in her own Canon's house.

Again and again Miss Burney refers in her diary to her friends, the Lockes. Apparently it was only necessary to mention their names for her to burst into rapturous praise of all the members of the family, with a fulsomeness which would annoy if her passionate devotion did not make it touching.

"And, thus encouraged, I indulged myself without restraint in speaking of that sweet girl and her most beloved and incomparable parents, and Mr. William and all the house in general."

But that Mr. Locke had a considerable reputation among his contemporaries is also proved by the extract below, from Boswell's *Life of Johnson:*

In the life of Milton, Johnson took occasion to maintain his own and the general opinion of the excellence of rhyme over blank verse in English poetry; and quotes this apposite illustration of it *"by an ingenious critik"* that *"it seems to be verse only to the eye."* The gentleman whom he thus characterizes as an

"ingenious critik" is (as he told Mr. Seward) Mr. Locke of Norbury Park in Surrey, whose knowledge and taste in the fine arts is universally celebrated, with whose elegance of manners the writer of the present work has felt himself much impressed, and to whose virtues a common friend who has known him long, and is not addicted to flattery gives the highest testimony.

I have in my possession a faded old letter, addressed to

Sir William Hamilton K.B.
His Britannick Majesty's Envoy
Extraordinary and Minister Plenipo[ry]
etc. etc. etc.
at Naples.

In a clear and flowing hand Mr. Locke writes to introduce his second son, Charles, to the British Minister and the famous Lady Hamilton.

Norbury Park
Near Leatherhead, Surrey
4th Nov. 1798

Sir

I take the liberty of recommending to you my second son now on his way to Naples as his Majesty's consul. I flatter myself you will find him deserving of your countenance. He is an amiable young man, with very good abilities; and well qualified to enjoy the gratifications so abundantly furnished by Art and Nature in the spot he is going to. He draws well, and invents with fancy. His wife, daughter of the Duchess of Leinster by Mr. Ogilvie, a very pleasant and well educated young woman, will, I trust, prove no unacceptable addition to your society.

I take this opportunity of begging your acceptance of a couple of prints after a design and picture of my son William who has the honour of being known to you and Lady Hamilton. The Market of Loves bears Bartolozzi's name alone, from a singular aversion my son had to the addition of his own as Inventor. I wish you could see the original of the same size, the heads in which have much more finesse and less of the commonplace and *banale* beauty, which the engraver, with all his merit,

is too apt to introduce, to the injury of character. The other after a picture of William's, has suffered full as much from the levelling manner of another engraver, obliterating the nicer discriminations and individuation of character. I will not say of the Market of Loves with poor Webb, who died a few months since, that it is a lovely composition, refined thinking and exquisite expression, uniting the chastity and beauty of the antique with the playfulness of Correggio. I believe you will think it, without any allowance for it being the production of a Dilettante, a very elegant composition. The Head of Wolsey is as good an historical portrait as any extant, the simplicity of the action and expression not unworthy of the School of Raffaello. If I have said too much, *La mi compatisca! Sono padre.*

Believe me, with great esteem and respect,
Sir
Your most obedient
humble servant
(Signed) Wm. Lock

This second son, Charles, so lovingly introduced, was born in 1770 and died in 1804 at the early age of thirty-four. He was also Consul General in Egypt, and it is supposed that his death proceeded from a fever occasioned by excessive fatigue in visiting the plains of Troy.

When Mr. Lock (or Locke) the elder, died at Norbury on the fifth of October, 1810, aged seventy-eight, he was succeeded by his eldest son, William Locke the second, who had inherited his father's artistic tastes and had distinguished himself in early days as a promising artist. His painting would now be considered strained and affected, but there are some etchings and drawings by him in the Print Room of the British Museum that reveal his

fine draughtsmanship and justify the loving pride with which his father speaks of him in his letter to Sir William Hamilton.

In June, 1819, William Locke the second decided to sell Norbury Hall and to spend his life in Rome and Paris. He married Miss Elizabeth Jennings, a famous beauty of her day, whose portrait by Lawrence is in the possession of my mother, Princess (Teresa) Colonna, and hangs in her house in Rome. It represents a young woman of brilliant coloring and large luminous eyes, with a string of corals round her neck.

In 1801, Miss Fanny Burney (Madame d'Arblay) records this saying of her son Alex, aged six:

> My Alex intends very soon to marry, and not long since, with the gravest simplicity, he went up to Mr. William Locke who was here with his fair Bride [Miss Jennings] and said: "How did you get that wife, William? Because I want to get such a one, and I don't know *which is the way.*"

William Locke and "his fair Bride" had three children. The eldest was William, of whom I will presently tell the tragic story, then came Charles who died in infancy, and Elizabeth.

The lovely Elizabeth married an Irish Peer, Lord Wallscourt, and their home, Ardfry, in County Galway, often welcomed Sir Thomas Lawrence, old friend and honored guest. I like to think of the great man whiling away the summer days in that wild corner of Ireland, painting the portraits of the beautiful Locke family.

Up to a few years ago Ardfry still possessed the portrait of Lady Wallscourt by Lawrence, a lovely vision in white

muslin playing the guitar, her lips half opened in song. There was also the portrait of her young brother William by the same artist, a beautiful picture well known under the title of "The Boy and Dog." William, about five years old, is barefooted and in a little white tunic, his hair curling in tight rings all over his head. He holds a big St. Bernard dog on a lead with his left hand, whilst with his right he caresses the animal's head.

Both these pictures have shared the fate of many others: the day came when money was more vital than family possessions, so the lovely singing lady and the "boy and dog" crossed the Atlantic and the halls of old Ardfry knew them no more.

But Lady Wallscourt's brother, William Locke the third, born in 1802, is the person who concerns my story.

The beautiful boy of Lawrence's picture, with his crown of curls, had grown into one of the handsomest young men of his time. Bulwer-Lytton, in *Ernest Maltravers,* refers to the "almost god-like beauty of the gallant Locke."

On November 11, 1821, he was gazetted Cornet and Sublieutenant, 1st Life Guards. He was the perfect type of the dashing young Guardsman of the day—debonair sportsman, and a gambler, yet with the artistic tastes and talent he could not help inheriting from his father and grandfather.

He did not escape notice in the society papers of the day. The *Court Journal* in its "London Letter" of September 12, 1829, says:

Did you hear of the Duke of Richmond calling upon William Locke by name, and requesting that gentleman

would not ride over the course at Goodwood, adding "It was hardly fair to single you out, Locke, but I wished to make someone blush, and knew 'twas vain to attempt such a thing with Tommy Duncombe."

It was inevitable that when William Locke should meet Selina Tollemache, one of the nine lovely daughters of Admiral and Lady Elizabeth Tollemache, love at first sight should follow.

Selina, born in 1812, was the seventh lovely daughter, the eldest, Elizabeth, Countess of Cardigan, being fifteen years older, and Georgina, Lady Mount Temple, ten years younger than herself. Her early youth was passed chiefly in London, in her father's house at Hyde Park Corner. The Admiral did not live to inherit the beautiful old family place in Suffolk, Helmingham, afterwards possessed by his eldest son, Lord Tollemache.

It is thanks to the tender affection of her brother Augustus Tollemache, who wrote a little memoir of his sister and gave it to me in his extreme old age, that I am in possession of the only details known of the romance of William and Selina. His picture of Selina is enchanting. She had a "tall graceful figure, golden brown curling hair, then worn in ringlets, large radiant eyes, with long lashes and rather sad eyebrows, a small straight nose, very short upper lip showing beautiful teeth and a long chin. She certainly was very pretty, and she thoroughly enjoyed the admiration she excited!"

But Admiral Tollemache was obdurate where Selina's love affair was concerned. Captain Locke in his opinion was a gay spendthrift. Selina's husband should be more serious and less beautiful, and not attracted by newfangled art ideas and foreign lands. Selina was sent to

Brighton away from the dangers of London. The Admiral did not remember that "love laughs at locksmiths."

On a wintry Sunday morning in Brighton all the Tollemache family went to church, except Selina, who said she was not feeling well.

About midday she slipped quietly out of the house at the corner of Arundel Terrace and joined William Locke, who had driven up in a yellow post-chaise with drawn blinds. She had made no preparations whatever for the journey—how I love her for it!—and only scribbled a hasty line asking forgiveness and that some clothes might be sent after her.

Her sister Marianne de Burgh looked out of her window at Grosvenor House on the Marine Parade, on hearing the rattle of the yellow post-chaise galloping past, and cried out to those in the room: "I am sure here is an elopement!"

They were married the next day in London, William's only sister, Lady Wallscourt, being present at the ceremony. The elopement formed the gossip of the Clubs that Monday morning, the papers were full of it, and the *Satirist* perpetrated a new pun.

Query: Is Miss T. really married?
Answer: Don't know, but she has certainly shown an inclination to wed*locke*."

It seems to me that the brief romance of William and Selina—both so beautiful and so young—is better visualized in the stiff stilted language of the newspapers of the time than by anything I could add.

The *Court Journal* of December 26, 1829, refers thus to the elopement:

Nothing can be more illiberal than the reports circulating respecting the marriage of Capt. Locke and Miss Tollemache, which, without wishing to advocate the cause of filial rebellion, we cannot but consider a well-assorted match. Miss Tollemache was one of the prettiest débutantes of last season. In the course of the summer William Locke proposed for her, and was refused by her parents; but the young lady, who had known him intimately from her childhood, kept up a clandestine correspondence with her lover, and eloped with him from Brighton, and they were married in London on the same morning.

Miss Tollemache has £8000, on which some of our contemporaries have grounded a charge of fortune hunting; but we rather imagine that Capt. Locke, who is recognized as one of the handsomest young men in London, who is very highly connected, and has uniformly moved in the first society, might have pretended to an heiress in good earnest, had he been capable of interested views. A want of fortune on both sides was the true and only objection to the marriage.

Three years of golden nappiness, during which the *Court Journal* finds other people to talk about—*les pays heureux n'ont point d'histoire!*

And then the plain, grim story of the tragedy.

OBITUARY NOTICE OF CAPT. WM. LOCKE

Oct. 6th, 1832

It is our painful task to announce the death of Captain Locke, who was drowned by the going down of his boat, on the 15th September, in one of those sudden squalls to which the Lake of Como is so subject. Captain Locke was as remarkable for the beauty of his person, as for the

high courage and perfect good temper which insured him the friendship of all who knew him. He was no less distinguished in the sporting world than in the circles of the *beau monde;* and he was an accomplished amateur artist, as his sketches and designs from the Waverley Novels prove.

This fine young man was in his 29th year. Captain and Mrs. Locke left England a few months ago, to join his parents whom they accompanied to Italy, and had passed the summer in a villa on the borders of the beautiful Lake Como. It is stated that the young and fondly attached wife witnessed the fearful catastrophe, as she was on the balcony watching her husband's return, when, at a short distance from the shore, a violent and sudden gust of wind swept him from her sight for ever. Bereaved of an only son, the unhappy father and mother, and the young and disconsolate wife are left to lament the loss of one whose youth and health gave promise of a long life, and whose existence constituted their chief happiness.

It is a singular coincidence that Captain Wm. Locke nearly met with a similar accident two years ago. While hunting with the stag-hounds at Windsor, he attempted to ford the Thames, and was extricated, at the peril of his life, when apparently lifeless. . . . The extreme beauty of the Locke family has been immortalized by the pencil of Lawrence, with whom they lived on terms of intimacy. The subject of our present notice was the original of the beautiful picture of the Boy and Dog engraved in the cameo annual.

William had decided to sail over to the town of Como on the other side of the lake to buy a finely modeled silver crucifix they had seen in a little shop the day before.

Selina said she would go too and had already got into the boat when her infant daughter began to cry so bitterly that she sprang out. "I'll stay with Baby," she said.

Some time afterwards one of the terrible Como storms sprang up. Selina from the terrace of the villa watched the little boat struggle homewards gallantly in the waves. William had two boatmen with him. A few minutes of agonized suspense, and then the disaster. Two men swimming for the shore . . . the frenzied rush down to meet them . . . surely one *must* be William . . . those two heads, coming nearer and nearer, but, oh! so slowly. . . .

They were the sailors. William, a powerful swimmer, must have been struck on the head when the boat capsized, and he was never seen again, for, strangely enough, his body was never recovered; though when the boat was washed ashore they found, wedged under the seat, the crucifix for which the trip was undertaken, and which is now in my mother's house in Rome.

On a rock going sheer down into the lake, and almost touching its waters, is a lonely inscription, the only record of a great sorrow, now forgotten by all.

GULIELMUS LOCK ANGLUS
IN CONSPECTU CONJUGIS
ET PARENTUM
SUBMERSUS
14 SEPTEMBER 1832

A few months later, in Milan, the broken-hearted Selina gave birth to a daughter, Augusta Selina, always known as Leila. Tragedy still haunted her life, for a

My great grandfather
Captain William Locke
Drowned in the Lake of Como

My grandmother, Leila Locke
At the time of her first marriage to
Lord Burghersh

little later the other baby daughter, who had saved her from the wreck by crying, passed away, having apparently accomplished her mission in life. The young and lovely widow was left to face life alone with a tiny daughter.

Leila grew up as lovely as her mother, though less tall and stately. They said of her: "She is like a bunch of sweet peas"—blue-purple eyes, pink cheeks, red mouth, and snowy neck, the beauty of the Locke family reappearing in another generation. Later on her critics in Naples said: "Elle est fille de Venus et de Polichinelle." But her reputation was always that of a radiant beauty. She had also inherited the Locke talents and painted and sang extremely well.

On the seventeenth of October, 1849, when she was only sixteen, her marriage to Lord Burghersh, eldest son of the Earl of Westmoreland, took place, and she was given away by the great Duke of Wellington, an old friend of the family.

It seemed as though sunshine was to reënter Selina's life. Leila's romance with handsome Burghersh was the sequel of her own love story. One day lovely Apethorpe would be theirs, and Leila would spend her life there, in the comfort of an English country home, surrounded by a loving family.

It is difficult to understand why Fate is sometimes so unmerciful.

The young couple spent some time in the Tower of London, where Lord Burghersh was quartered, but a few months afterwards the young husband had a bad fall from his horse. Mental trouble soon developed and, although he was always gentle and kind to his young girl wife—she told me so herself—his condition was such that

old, and take every opportunity of gathering information from them on the days of long ago. One realizes it when it is too late, the precious chances are lost, and the lips that could have told us so many stories of the past are closed forever. How I regret not having asked my grandmother countless questions! As for my great-grandmother, Mrs. William Locke, how wonderful it would have been to have had her account, first-hand, of the Como tragedy! But though she lived until I was twelve, I never heard her refer to it, and the only anecdote I can remember her telling me was about the day she went up Vesuvius to view an eruption, when her galoshes melted and stuck in the ground and had to be left behind!

Little Teresa Caracciolo grew up continuing the family tradition of good looks, and was excessively willful and attractive. Her pictures show her with a wealth of golden curls and curiously dark eyes. She also inherited from the Lockes a love of art and literature, and sang charmingly. Alternately in England with her mother and grandmother, and in Italy with her father, she lived between the two countries until 1875, when she married Marcantonio Colonna, Duca di Marino, eldest son of Prince Colonna of Rome.

About this time Duchessa di San Teodoro divorced her husband, married Lord Walsingham of Merton Hall, Norfolk, and settled in England.

Marcantonio Colonna and Teresa Caracciolo were my father and mother.

That I, Vittoria Colonna, should write at length about my English parentage instead of dwelling on my own Colonna family, may seem an absurdity; but I must plead forgiveness.

The history of the Colonna family is the history of Rome throughout the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. You read about it all in many books. They pass, the long line of Colonnas, with the waving of proud banners and the blare of many trumpets. A grand procession, Popes, warriors, bishops, fair women, saints, and sinners. Pope Martin V, restoring the Papacy to its rightful see in Rome after the long exile in Avignon; Prospero Colonna, that grim fighter, the news of whose death was spread to put heart into his enemies—"Coraggio, compagni, Colonna è morto!"; Marcantonio Colonna commanding the Pope's galleys at the naval battle of Lepanto, and routing the Turks in their own waters; Vittorio Colonna, pale and spiritual in her black robes, walking in the Colonna gardens with "Messer" Michelangelo Buonarroti; Maria Mancini Colonna, gay and debonair, tossing her curls and fingering the pearls bestowed on her as a parting love-token by Louis XIV. . . .

I see them all passing along throughout the centuries, with all their many stories of love and hate and glory, their tragedies and their fame. Yes, the trumpets blare and the banners wave, and there they go. . . .

But as I write here on the hillside overhanging the blue waters of Lago di Como, I hear a fainter melody calling —as sweet as the pipes of Pan fluting through the summer forest, and I must follow it, drawn by its charm. It is the story of the handsome Lockes, just simple English gentlefolk, who loved the arts and whose lives were strangely interwoven with the Italy where eventually they were to leave descendants. When I die there will be no one left who cares enough to remember them. As I look down into the deep waters of Lago di Como, I

the picture gallery, full of masterpieces, and with its great hall which served as model for the Galérie des Glaces at Versailles.

As a child I used to love to go down there on hot days with a book and spend an hour in the cool marble hall among the statues. There were on the walls so many portraits of dead and gone Colonnas, and I liked to look at them and to remember all their histories. Vittoria Colonna, painted just before her marriage, and long before Michelangelo came into her life, young, and yet so austere in her dark green dress; Stefano Colonna immortalized by Holbein, so curiously northern looking with his red beard and short nose; Maria Mancini with her famous pearl necklace and a sidelong glance and smile; her son with his curly wig, whom I was supposed to resemble so strikingly; Cardinal Pompeo Colonna, with his hand resting on his funny little white dog;. and then the big portrait by Velasquez of Carlo Colonna on his black horse, with an angel carrying a column in the heavens before him. Arrogant he must have been, for he was the last Colonna to kill a Caetani. And the tale is so characteristic that I must tell it. It all happened in the seventeenth century, which is quite modern in the history of Rome.

The Duchess of Sermoneta and the Princess Colonna of the day both went out driving in their coaches and met at the entrance of the Corso. Neither of the coachmen, doubtless encouraged by their mistresses, would yield precedence to the other. There was a good deal of scuffling of hoofs and champing of bits and sour looks exchanged, and the ladies returned to their respective homes full of indignation and complaints.

So then a sort of collective duel was fought in the streets of Rome, between several male Colonnas and Caetanis, and their respective gentlemen-in-waiting. If Carlo Colonna was arrogant enough to be portrayed with an angel carrying his family arms, he thought nothing of killing a Caetani, which he did with ease and grace. But times had changed, and what was considered an everyday occurrence in the Middle Ages was murder in the seventeenth century, so poor Carlo was exiled and ended his life in a monastery in Spain.

And then besides the family portraits there were other things that interested me enormously. One was the great chair that always stood with its face to the wall, under the tall canopy, for no one but the Pope could sit in it, when he came to visit the Colonnas. I used to love to perch in that chair, staring at the red velvet wall in front of me and feeling extremely daring and wicked. Then there was the huge ebony cabinet with its ivory panels, all exquisitely carved with the tiniest figures and trees imaginable. The center panel was an accurate reproduction of Michelangelo's Last Judgment in the Sistine Chapel. It took two Germans twenty years to carve that cabinet, and their receipted bill—for an absurdly small sum—is in the Colonna archives.

But there was one terrible picture I only passed with my eyes tight shut, it frightened me so: the Devil, with horns and a tail and other horrid attributes, was dragging a baby out of its cradle, in spite of the wretched mother hanging on to the infant's foot. The Devil's claws were buried deep in the flesh of the little arm, and blood was dripping from the wound. The mother was looking up

to Heaven with an open, imploring mouth and there above her was the Madonna with a big stick in her hand, just making ready to drive the Devil away. I do not remember the author of that nightmare picture but any tourist visiting the Colonna gallery can see it for himself.

I think we lived very casually, for I was allowed, ever since I can remember, to have a key of the picture gallery and all its untold treasures, and kept it loose in a drawer among my handkerchiefs and ribbons!

On the ground floor was the so-called apartment of Maria Mancini, a suite of exquisitely frescoed drawing-rooms and halls, opening one into another. They had been originally decorated by Pinturicchio, but as they were already damaged at the time of Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna's marriage with Maria Mancini in 1661 they were redecorated for the event by Gaspar Poussin.

I like to think of Maria—my how many times great-grandmother? (for I descend directly from her)—wandering through those beautiful rooms in her brocaded gowns, still longing for Paris and mourning her royal lover, Louis XIV, but surely a little comforted by the beauty of her surroundings.

In my father's day the ground floor apartment was not used for receptions as the family archives were kept there. It was only once thrown open in his time, for the great ball my father gave in honor of my sister's début.

As my two brothers died when they were babies, the title of Prince Colonna passed after my father's death to his second brother, Fabrizio, and then from him to his son Marcantonio who is the present holder of the title. My father left in his will the Palazzo Colonna to his nephew Marcantonio, for the sake of the family, so my sister and

G. Felici

My father, Prince Colonna

In the costume he wore, as Prince Assistant to the Holy See, at the great ceremonies in the Vatican

I lost our old home which would otherwise have remained ours.

In these unique surroundings we two small and rather lonely girls lived with our father and a succession of peculiarly disagreeable governesses of various nationalities. Our father and mother had separated after very few years. Unfortunately matrimonial bliss has never been customary in our family.

My father was extremely handsome and very *grand seigneur* and *ancien régime* in all his ideas. He liked London, but was fonder of Paris, enjoyed shooting without liking the country, owned a racing stable in Italy, had been a good amateur actor in his youth and only admitted three possible careers for a gentleman: the army, diplomacy, and the Church. He did not believe in the existence of microbes or of ghosts. He had a horror of education for girls and said young ladies should talk good French, play the piano, and dance lightly. Any other accomplishment made them a bore. He always carried an opera hat under his arm in the evening and never wore a pair of boots more than a few times.

In his later years he disliked anything more "country" than St. Moritz in August. I have heard him quote a French friend's sentiments as exactly defining his own: "Je déteste le Bois de Boulogne, cela me rappelle trop la campagne."

He was an excellent mimic, and though he never seemed to notice things particularly he would reproduce people's characteristics of voice and mannerisms in a remarkable way.

The succession of foreign governesses all tried to make up to him, but he was not attracted by their charms and

saw them—and consequently us—as little as possible, which was probably the reason why the governesses became so bad tempered.

All the love and affection we wanted was given to us lavishly by our English nurse, Elizabeth Annie Sizeland, the beloved "Sizy," who came as my nurse in London three days after I was born and stayed with me for thirty years, only leaving to be replaced by her daughter who, happily for me, is still with me as my maid and friend. I am happy to say that Sizy is alive and well, living in her little house in Hampstead, and always the first to greet me with a loving welcome when I visit England.

Sizy took lively part in our games, mothered us when we were ill—which in my case was very often—and fought our battles royally with the disagreeable governesses. Thanks to her, there was a corner in the vast Palazzo Colonna that was forever England.

Otherwise our child life in Rome was pretty dreary—few friends and fewer amusements. In those days children were not the fashion, and what they thought and felt and wanted was not considered in the least interesting or important.

In winter we drove out every afternoon with the reigning governess in the big family landau; we were never taken to see any of the marvels of Rome or taught anything about them.

On Mondays and Fridays we drove to Villa Pamphili; on Tuesdays and Saturdays to Villa Borghese, on Sundays to the Pincio, and on Wednesdays to Viale Parioli. We were made to get out and walk for exactly an hour and then return to our particularly stupid lessons at Palazzo Colonna.

When the spring came it was a little better, for we were taken twice a day to play in the Colonna Gardens, which communicate, as I have already said, with the palazzo by old stone bridges that cross Via della Pilotta. Here we spent pleasanter hours playing round the statues and up and down the steps under the big cypresses, and though we were in the heart of Rome the town seemed very far away.

But the time of year we lived for was June, when we were put in the train with beloved Sizy and whichever of the disagreeable governesses was reigning at the time, and sent off to England to stay with our grandmother, Lady Walsingham.

One of my earliest recollections is Victoria Station in London, and a barouche with two fat gray horses drawn up alongside the platform. There are two old ladies in it, one with plaited hair arranged in "paddle boxes" over her ears and a large round bonnet tied under her chin; the other adorned with black laces and plumes and long pearl earrings and holding a pug dog on her lap. They are mother and daughter, Mrs. William Locke and Lady Walsingham, my great-grandmother and my grandmother, and they are both eagerly welcoming "the children from Rome."

But with this recollection my grateful thoughts fly at once to another person, thanks to whom my childhood knew the blessings of English country life. Lord Walsingham, my grandmother's third husband, was all kindness to "the children from Rome," or "the Toddlemites," as he liked to call us, treating us exactly as though we had been his own grandchildren. His lovely home, Merton Hall in Norfolk, was open to us with loving hospi-

tality summer after summer; his old coachman, Amos Carrier, gave us our first riding lessons on Merrylegs and Snowdrop, two ponies Walsingham purchased for our own use. It gave us the illusion that we really belonged to the place, and I'm afraid we took all his extraordinary kindness for granted, but we certainly repaid it with a most wholehearted devotion to "W," as we called him. His unfailing good temper, his ready jokes, his cleverness and agility at all games, made him an ideal playmate for children. To the world in general he was famous as one of the two best shots in England—Lord de Grey sharing the honor with him—and the great authority on entomology, his vast collection of moths and butterflies at which we always saw him working morning after morning being now in the British Museum.

It is with reverence that my thoughts turn to Merton Hall, the place to which I gave such passionate adoration in my youth that the mere mention of its name now brings a mist before my eyes. There is a sadness in having so loved a place to which one does not belong, in a country that is not one's own. Merton has now passed out of my life forever, but I treasure its memories more than anything else in my life. Merton taught me to love games, green grass, and trees, the blackberry hedges and the nut woods, the whirr of the pheasants rising in the park, the bulrushes on the shores of the mere.

I had friends in all the cottages of the surrounding villages, Merton, Tomston, Tottington, and Stanford, who did not even realize I was not English, but knew me and greeted me affectionately as "the young lady from the Hall."

Carrier and his kindly wife were among my dearest

friends. I had my first toss off Merrylegs, and Snowdrop I continued to ride long after she had gone blind; but she cantered gayly all the same; and at the sound of my warning: "Hold up, pretty girl!" would slow up and feel for the obstacle with her hoof.

Merton Hall itself is a large, rambling, red-brick Elizabethan house, surrounded by a large park and "home woods." In my day it had no bathrooms or electric light. A bevy of neat housemaids carried cans of hot water to the various bedrooms and prepared tubs for all, and two candles in each room was considered sufficient illumination.

The old oak staircase with the family pictures on the walls and its large stained-glass window was one of the features of the house. How I loved that old staircase, and indeed every corner of the house. I could find my way about it blindfolded even now after so many weary years.

All the bedrooms had different names, recorded on little brass plates in old fashioned lettering. There was "Adam and Eve," so called on account of its very curious early ceiling, "Puss in the Corner," "Pheasant," "Partridge" (these were side by side), "France," "Spain" and "Savoy," "California," "San Francisco," and "Oregon." "The Nunnery" was a little suite of rooms on the top of the house. "The Babes in the Wood," "Robin Redbreast," and "The Wicked Uncle" were together at the end of a wing. I considered it peculiarly appropriate that the governess should always have "The Wicked Uncle" allotted to her.

Referring to the names of these last rooms, the famous tragedy of the Babes in the Wood was supposed to have happened close by, in what is now called Wayland Wood, where I have been nutting many a time.

At the top of the house was a long gallery where we played on rainy days and which was a perfect treasure ground for children. It was stacked with old furniture, cases containing every sort of oddity, including fancy costumes—or were they really old period dresses? I remember a white wig, dusty books, a rocking horse with an arched neck and fiery nostrils that seemed to us gigantic in those days and must have been at least a hundred years old.

And so regularly every year we left the old palace in Rome and came to England, where for six months we led the ordinary life of English children.

I have always noticed how other people in their memoirs seem to dwell excessively on their old homes and youthful memories. They now have my sympathy, for I find it a struggle for me not to do the same; particularly so, as those years spent in the blessed British countryside are a chapter in my life now closed forever. All the dear ones are dead, and Merton has now been let since many a long day. I have spent long summers under other skies, without a sight of England to gladden my eyes. I have seen unfamiliar trees turning in the autumn and remembered the russet leaves and golden bracken of Merton, the hoar frost on the hedges, and the rooks cawing in the park, the gray church with the round Saxon tower, and in its shadow a tiny grave:

STEFANO COLONNA
BORN AT OXBOROUGH HALL 18TH DEC. 1884.
DIED 2ND FEB. 1885.
THE LORD GAVE AND THE LORD HATH TAKEN AWAY.
BLESSED BE THE NAME OF THE LORD.

If my baby brother had lived, what a difference it would have made in all our lives!

When I was still very tiny we all went up to Walsingham's shooting box in Yorkshire—Blubber House—for the grouse shooting in August. It was there, on August 30, 1888, that he made the famous bag of 1070 grouse to his gun alone, which has remained a record, I believe, to this day.

But soon, owing to financial difficulties, Blubber House and its famous moor was always let. About the same time Walsingham found it more convenient to let also the Merton shooting, instead of incurring the vast expense of shooting parties.

For several consecutive years he found an excellent tenant in the person of Mr. Shoolbred of Tottenham Court Road fame. I remember hearing the arrangement discussed *en famille* when I was a child. As Mr. Shoolbred knew nothing of the organization of a shoot, he particularly wished Walsingham to have charge of all arrangements and to shoot daily with the party. All the game was also left to him, except a few brace that Mr. Shoolbred distributed to various friends. This ideal tenant did not wish to occupy the hall, but rented instead an old farmhouse on the estate, Mortimer Farm, so Walsingham and my grandmother were left comfortably in possession of their country home.

The only fly in the ointment existed for us children, for though Mr. Shoolbred himself was a very good and careful shot, the friends he brought down were both inexperienced and wild. They gayly peppered keepers and dogs and, in fact, any one who had the misfortune to be in their immediate vicinity, so it was decreed unsafe for

the children to go out with the shooters. This was a bitter disappointment, for there was nothing we enjoyed more.

But Walsingham often used to go out for a day by himself, either after partridges in September or after pheasants in the early days of October and liked to take my sister and myself along with him. How I loved being sent into a plantation with a keeper and an odd boy and doing my share of work as a beater! And the tramps through the turnip fields, all big bumps underfoot and huge cuplike leaves full of water that emptied themselves into one's boots at every step! I would have died sooner than admit I was tired, but still remember the relief when we got on to the high road once more and had a mile or so of easy walking before beginning again.

Walsingham was always a delightful companion, and our hurried luncheons partaken of under the shelter of a hedge were amongst the gayest meals I ever had.

We were so accustomed to his marvelous shooting that nothing that he did ever surprised us. I remember a pheasant once got up just as he was climbing a gate, and he threw up his gun with only one hand and shot it dead. He had the quickest eye and hand imaginable. Later on, after my marriage, when I went to shooting parties both in England and Italy, it always seemed to me that every one shot extremely badly, simply because I was so used to Walsingham's high level.

But to return to winter life in Rome.

When I was about fifteen my existence became more cheerful. The latest disagreeable governess of the dynasty was rather less obnoxious than her predecessors, and I began to get glimpses of the outside world. I was

My Mother

Princess Teresa Colonna and Duchess of San Teodoro
in her own right

From a painting by O. Hicks

stronger in health and full of vitality. My father began to take more interest in us now that we were growing up. All the same, amusements were few and far between; but then in those days the smallest departure from everyday life was an excitement.

On the death of my grandfather, Prince Giovanni Andrea Colonna, my father succeeded to the title, and also to the charge of Prince Assistant to the Holy See. For the benefit of the uninitiated I must explain that the heads of the two great Roman families, Colonna and Orsini, are hereditary Principi Assistenti al Soglio.

Pope Julius II in 1503, in the vain hopes of putting an end to the fierce feud between the two families, created these posts, but his move hadn't the desired effect and the fighting continued just the same. It was impossible to have the two Princes in attendance on the Pope at the same time as neither would yield precedence to the other. Endless quarreling took place over this question for over two hundred years, until Benedict XIII, who was an Orsini, hit upon a solution which seems as easy as the famous one for solving the problem of Columbus' egg: Prince Colonna and Prince Orsini would take turns in being in attendance on the Pope, and thus never meet. The custom continues to this day. When at the great ceremonies in St. Peter's or at the Sistine Chapel, it is always either Prince Colonna or Prince Orsini who, in his picturesque black costume, stands besides the Pope's throne.

But all through my girlhood old Prince Orsini was always unable to be present at the Vatican ceremonies, so my father was in constant attendance, and it is only in these last years that the present Prince Orsini and my

cousin, Marcantonio Colonna, have resumed the custom of taking regular turns at this duty. Though they are excellent friends, the old ground of contention about precedence has survived throughout the centuries until this day, and it is an understood thing in Rome that Prince Colonna and Prince Orsini can never sit at the same dinner table.

After my grandfather's death my father changed his life very considerably, as he definitely ranged himself on the "Black" side, that is among the Vatican's adherents. Before doing this he had a last audience with King Humbert, with whom he had been on very friendly terms but whom now, on account of political reasons, he was destined never to see again. The King most tactfully approved of my father's assuming the Colonna hereditary charge, according to tradition, and when he finally shook hands with him he said:

"If everybody understood each other as well as you and I do, there would be no political complications in Italy."

My father, in his picturesque black kilted costume, with silk mantle, used to drive to the Vatican, accompanied by his gentleman-in-waiting and his private chaplain. I think it is one of the last instances of a Roman Prince having a gentleman in attendance on him, and of course it was only on these occasions. In everyday life this *gentiluomo* was one of my father's agents, but he also wore a costume, with a cocked hat and sword, when he went to the Vatican and was very proud of his rôle.

After my father's last audience with the King, he was received, together with his two daughters, in private audience by Pope Leo XIII. We wore the black frocks and lace mantillas that are still customary at the Vatican. The

Pope looked scarcely human in his emaciation and parchment-like coloring and was incredibly ugly. He wore mittens and his shriveled fingers emerging from them looked like forks. He asked my father whether he destined either of us to be a nun, which prejudiced me against him.

The following year, on account of the fatigue occasioned by giving private audiences to all the "Black" families, it was decided that the Pope should hold a New Year's reception instead, receiving all the *Patriziato Romana* in a body.

I think the first of these receptions was held in 1896 and they were continued every year until his death. They were a curious mixture of religion and society. We all assembled in one of the large drawing-rooms of the Vatican decorated with fine old frescoed ceiling and frieze and hung with crimson brocade. At one end of the room, on some steps, was the Pope's throne, shadowed by a great canopy. While we were waiting for his arrival the function seemed like an ordinary party: the young people gathered together in the deep set windows, chattered and chaffed and had a very good time in the unspoilt manner of those days. Of course all the women wore black with lace mantillas, and the men were in evening dress. There was a great art in arranging the mantilla properly, and the smartest women employed a celebrated hairdresser called Lancia to do so, and fastened the lace with all their most beautiful jewels.

When the Pope arrived and took his place on the throne, all voices were hushed, and then my father, standing near him, would make a little speech, offering good wishes for the New Year in the name of all present and

asking for a blessing. The Pope would answer with a few well-chosen words and then await the *défilé* of the Roman nobility.

My sister and I had to be the first to pass, which was shy work, but on an imperceptible nod from my father we would come forward and kneel before the Pope and listen to whatever he found to say to us, after which we moved on and our place was taken by the next family on the list. My father presented each one by name, in case the Pope did not remember them.

On New Year's Day—I think it must have been in 1897—I had been ill and was not able to accompany my father and my sister to the Vatican. On their return my sister burst into my room in an abject state of despair, holding her head in her hands.

"Oh, Vittoria," she wailed, "I have done something too awful, too dreadful. Never will I get over it!"

I remember sitting straight up in bed in my anxiety.

"Surely you didn't trip over the Pope?" I suggested, awestruck, trying to think of the worst thing that could happen.

"No, but I went up to the throne *directly* after Papa's speech; I forgot the Pope had to answer first, you see! And *they just waved me away!*"

It seemed to my poor sister, who was only eighteen at the time, the worst humiliation that could befall her, and with tears running down her face she kept repeating:

"It was all that old Princess Ruspoli's fault; she pushed me in the back and said, 'Go on!' Now wouldn't you think she was old enough to know better?"

CHAPTER III

OLD DAYS IN ROME

IN February, 1897, my father gave a beautiful ball at Palazzo Colonna for my sister's "coming-out." In a way it was my coming-out, too, as I was present at it though only sixteen at the time, and I think no one was more truly débutantes than we were, for so closely had we been guarded up till then that we had never met any young men, except our cousins, until that evening. I was so shy that I prayed as I danced—for fear of treading on my partner's toes. And my prayers must have been successful, for I was kept at it until dawn! It was on that occasion that the Maria Mancini apartment on the ground floor was thrown open for the first time for many years. It is now inhabited by my cousin, the present Prince Colonna.

I remember the first guest to arrive was Monsignor Stoner, the English Bishop who had christened me in London and who was to perform my marriage ceremony in Rome twenty years later. He arrived early, according to the custom of Roman prelates, so as to leave before the dancing began, and I accompanied him round the frescoed drawing-rooms that he was very anxious to inspect as he had never seen them.

In those days the Black world was still very large and included, curiously enough, all the prettiest girls in Rome: Maria, Laura, and Giacinta Ruspoli, a trio of beautiful sisters in a family famed for its good looks, Nita Lante,

Lavinia, and Bebetta Bourbon del Monte, Maria and Christina Lancellotti. . . .

The border line between Black and White society was very marked, and the Black was the aggrieved party, for they considered that the Pope had been unlawfully deprived of his temporal power in 1870 when Italy became a united country, and that he should really be King of Rome. So the Blacks would have nothing to do with the Whites, who remained more serenely indifferent in the matter.

There were three brothers called Macchi who were friends of ours after our début. They belonged to the Blacks and had an old uncle who was a Cardinal. All these boys had in turn to do their military service, through no wish of their own, but because it was the law of the country. All the same the old Cardinal absolutely refused to see them wearing the Italian uniform, and when the moment for his service came the particular Macchi boy in question had to bid a formal farewell to his uncle, kiss his hand, and not appear before him until he was out of uniform once more.

I remember hearing the Spanish Ambassadress to the Vatican, Madame Merry del Val, mother of the Spanish Ambassador now in London, and of the Cardinal, say when organizing a *thé de bienfaisance:*

"I cannot preside over the tea table, for if a lady of the White world comes up I couldn't possibly offer her a cup of tea."

Now that peace has been made between the Pope and the King of Italy all this ill-feeling is now a thing of the past, but even before this, except on strictly official occa-

sions, the two parties have met and mingled freely, all the best of friends, since many years.

Though I did not go to all the social functions that year with my sister, my father now and then relented and took me about with him, in spite of my extreme youth. Though he was very severe, I think my gayety and love of fun really amused him.

When we went to formal parties to which Cardinals were invited, there were footmen with lighted torches at the foot of the stairs, waiting to escort the Cardinals to the antechamber, according to old custom. The gala liveries of the servants in the old Roman families were very magnificent, and these are still used in present times. My father ranked as a Cardinal according to Vatican etiquette, so when we arrived at a party the order: "Torcie!" was given also for him, and two footmen walked in front of us bearing their torches on high, which looked rather funny up a staircase already brilliantly lighted with electric light. This custom dates from the days when Roman staircases were unlit, and servants with torches were provided for the convenience of guests when they were of sufficient importance.

I used to delight in getting my father to tell me the story of how he used to stand among the servants in his father's antechamber at Palazzo Colonna when he was a little boy, and watch the guests arriving and departing. With his delightful talent for mimicry he would imitate for my amusement the old *maestro di casa's* (literally "master of the house" but meaning *butler*) expression, firstly when an ambassador was leaving the reception and the old man would call out pompously, "Torcie!" the order being followed by a scurry of footmen and flaming

torches, and then when an unimportant lady departed, when he would cast a supercilious glance at her and then study the ceiling disdainfully, whilst the poor thing stumbled and flopped down the dark stairs as best she could.

We visited the old Duchess Salviati, who was at home every Monday evening. Her drawing-room was furnished with stiff chairs placed round the walls, and on one side a still stiffer sofa on which she sat, surrounded by the guests of honor, usually my father and some Cardinals.

I find that I wrote a description of our first evening in Casa Salviati in my youthful diary:

"It was a real old Roman reception at Salviati's last night: the large dimly lighted staircase, the solemn footmen in the anticamera, and the stateliness that reigned in the drawing-room. Three Cardinals sat solemnly on a sofa with their red skull caps on their heads and their silk mantles falling in correct folds about them. They were surrounded by several hideous old ladies and ugly old gentlemen representing the Cream of Black Society. I made my lowest curtsey to the mistress of the house . . . and finally found myself seated with several uninteresting damsels on a row of chairs with our backs to the wall, carrying on a most correct society conversation. Presently one of the few young men present came and appropriated the chair next to me. He was Don ——, a small youth with widely opened gray eyes, a perpetually scared expression, lanky coal black hair, red nose, and the most absurdly squeaky voice I've ever heard. . . ."

Such was my vitality that I managed to get enjoyment even out of that sort of evening!

It was during the carnival of 1897 that we attended the last big dinner and ball ever given by Prince and Princess

A corner of the Colonna gardens

The statues date from the Roman Empire. The heads, after portraits of famous members of the Colonna family, were substituted in the seventeenth century

Lancellotti, now both dead. Prince Lancellotti was one of the staunchest of the Pope's supporters, and after 1870, when Italy became a United Kingdom, he shut his front door in sign of mourning, and as his son continued the same tradition, it was never opened again until 1929.

In spite of the closed front door, the Lancellottis gave yearly parties, but the only one I saw was the last of the series. The guests went in at a small side entrance. On that occasion the ball was preceded by a dinner of sixty—my first experience at a banquet—and as usual I managed to extract a lot of fun from what was really a rather solemn and dull affair. Though the ball that followed was a large one, not one of the guests had been presented at Court, nor was there a single officer in uniform. It would be impossible to give such a party nowadays. "Le combat finit, faute de combatants."

My rather sad and lonely childhood was now a thing of the past, and until I married in 1901 my Roman seasons were full of *joie de vivre*. All parties were not as stiff as the Salviati one, and I remember the gayest of balls with cotillions that lasted all night.

Though my father was very fond of me he was excessively severe, but no scoldings could damp my youthful spirits for very long. I loved bicycling and had discovered a sort of cycling school or track called Pista Tomei where people went to learn to ride and which became my happy hunting ground. I got up gymkhanas, an unknown thing in Rome, inventing absurd races for which I wheedled nice prizes out of my father, and I often succeeded in winning them. I remember an Orsini having a crashing fall over an obstacle, and my joy was so intense

and so openly demonstrated that it was attributed to the spirit of the old family feud!

I also started games of bicycle polo which took place in the middle of the track, to the great worry and confusion of the people who were learning to ride on its outside edge! These games were an importation from Merton where, during the happy summer months, several young friends and I played bicycle polo on the lawn. In Rome this was considered quite a daring innovation, terrific tumbles were the order of the day, and I remember my father's indignation when on inquiring why I had a long scratch on my cheek I explained that it had been caused by somebody else's pedal!

When my sister married Marchese Chigi of Siena in 1899, the last of the disagreeable governesses left, and I had a charming Italian *dame de compagnie,* cultivated and kind, who came every afternoon to accompany me wherever I wished to go, while my darling Sizy went out with me in the morning, for, needless to say, I was not allowed to go about by myself.

One of my dancing partners was an eccentric young American. He came to Rome for a couple of seasons and had a mania for giving huge dinner parties, to which he invited indiscriminately every one he met. He never could remember a name and rarely recognized a face, so he seemed to exist in a perpetual gray fog of confusion. His conversation was fragmentary and disjointed; in fact it was very difficult to understand *what* he was talking about most of the time. My father took a most violent dislike to what he considered the most obnoxious youth he had ever seen, and snubbed him unmercifully. I was rather sorry for the poor thing as he really seemed not

normal and rather pathetically bewildered by life. He couldn't understand why we never accepted the invitations to his banquets at the Grand Hotel.

At that time a little old professor who had been one of my childhood's teachers and who still came to read Dante with me had fallen on bad days and was urgently in need of pupils. I persuaded my eccentric young friend to learn Italian and engage my old master, so he used to have him at the Grand Hotel every day, keeping him the whole morning, and, after giving him a good luncheon, would send him down to Palazzo Colonna in his own carriage. The professor told me that the lessons did not really take place; his pupil would walk about the room in his dressing gown, occasionally playing the piano and quite unable to concentrate on a single word of Italian. When I asked him what he was learning, he answered that they were reading something about a chap called Ariosto Furioso. But I like to record an act of kindness in one who afterwards had so much to his discredit.

My acquaintance with the young man was nipped in the bud by my father's severity, which perhaps was just as well. It was on our arrival in London in the summer of 1898 that I received a letter from the impossible young man.

Dear Donna Vittoria [it ran more or less],

I am glad you have at last arrived in a country where men can write to girls. Will you come to the Opera in my box on Thursday night?

My father confiscated the note, and answered it himself.

Dear Mr. —— [he wrote],

Though we are in London, I do not permit you to write to my daughter, so I answer your letter myself to say that she will not go to the Opera with you on Thursday evening. . . .

Undaunted, he replied:

Dear Prince Colonna,

I did not know you were also in London. Won't you come to the Opera on Thursday and bring your daughter?

My father, growing curter and curter, wrote that he wouldn't come and he wouldn't bring his daughter. And then came a last note from that phenomenon:

Dear Prince Colonna,

If you don't wish to bring your daughter to the Opera on Thursday night, won't you come alone with me in my box?

My father was so exasperated that I think he left London!

My existence continued to alternate between happy summers in the depths of Norfolk and winters in Palazzo Colonna, as it had all my life. I made many friends among old and young and loved them all.

In the spring of 1901 I met my future husband for the first time. His sister Giovanella, later Baronne Grenier, and his brother Gelasio, who were much younger than he, I had known as a child, when they used to come with their Kennedy cousins to play with us at Palazzo Colonna. I was very small at the time and the youngest of the lot, so they bullied me unmercifully. One day the faithful

Sizy rose like a lioness in defense of her cub and boxed all their ears, after which she made them put on their hats and coats and sit in a row till their governess called for them. They did not come to Palazzo Colonna again, and it was several years later, at one of my first balls, that a good-looking young man came up to me and said:

"Hullo, Vittoria! Don't you remember me? I am Gelasio!"

So I laughed and hid my face in the crook of my arm and said:

"Please don't hit me!"

I first met Leone Caetani at Ninfa when I went there with a party of friends on one of the first automobile picnic trips that took place in Rome. Ninfa lies in the Pontine Marshes and belonged to the Duke of Sermoneta. In those days it was deserted and full of romantic charm. The village of Ninfa was abandoned during the Middle Ages, the legend says on account of the malarious climate, and the ruins of its houses and seven churches were covered with ivy; judas trees grew among them and violets and cyclamens carpeted the ground. A stream flows through what used to be the village, and on one side rises a picturesque tower from the top of which a Caetani once hurled three priests who happened to disagree with him. Mountains overhang one side of Ninfa, while on the other are the limitless plains of the Pontine Marshes. In the far distance is the Castle of Sermoneta, perched on the summit of a hill like an eagle's nest.

Ninfa now belongs to my brother-in-law, Gelasio Caetani, who has restored the Caetani tower and adjoining house, and turned the whole place into a carefully kept garden. His roses are beautiful, but the charm of the

spot, for those who knew Ninfa in the old days, is quite altered.

When I went to Ninfa for the first time Leone Caetani was living near by, at Cisterna, as he did summer and winter, for he managed his father's vast estates. He joined our merry picnic among the ruins and happened to sit near me. When we all left he made up his mind to go to Rome and marry me, and as my father wished it, too, a fortnight later we were engaged.

We were married in June in the picture gallery of Palazzo Colonna. I suppose it was one of the most typically Roman weddings that has ever been, and the wonderful surroundings made a unique setting for it. The Colonna and the Caetani families had always been deadly enemies down to comparatively recent times, and very few marriages have ever taken place between them. Onorato Caetani, Duke of Sermoneta, married Agnese Colonna in 1556, and that was the last union between the two families.

The throne room was transformed into a chapel, and Mass celebrated under the red velvet canopy, on the same spot where by-gone Colonnas used to receive the visiting Popes. I had the choice of two beautiful lace wedding veils, the Colonna and the Caetani one, and chose the latter, hoping it would be the luckiest! My train was held by two small pages, my future brother-in-law Michelangelo Caetani and my cousin Piero Colonna.

After the wedding ceremony we received the congratulations of our friends in the great marble gallery. As it was late in the season all foreigners had left Rome, and I do not think there was a single guest present who was not Italian. Representatives of all the old names that

have made the history of Rome were there: Colonna, Caetani, Orsini, Massimo, Theodoli, Ruspoli, Vitelleschi, Barberini.

The wedding breakfast took place in the famous Maria Mancini apartment, and directly afterwards we left for Frascati, where Duke Grazioli, a friend of my father-in-law, had lent us his beautiful villa Montalto for our honeymoon. As automobiles were still considered too unreliable, and also undignified, we drove there in a carriage with four horses.

CHAPTER IV

IN THE STREET OF THE DARK SHOPS

IT is impossible to imagine two abodes more utterly different than my old home, Palazzo Colonna—so spacious, so full of light and sunshine, with its wonderful old gardens and enormous courtyards, its priceless picture gallery and innumerable frescoed walls—and Palazzo Caetani, in Via delle Botteghe Oscure, that is, "the street of the dark shops," one of the narrowest streets in Rome.

Palazzo Caetani is in itself a rather fine building, designed by Ammanati, one of Michelangelo's pupils, but spoilt by an extra story built above its cornice by a practical but inartistic Caetani. Its darkness and melancholy is overwhelming.

On the first floor, the so-called *piano nobile,* where my parents-in-law lived, the electric light was in constant use at luncheon during the winter, and in several of the drawing-rooms it was necessary literally to grope one's way in the perpetual gloom.

When I was taken to call there for the first time, and as a fiancée passed the forbidding portals of the palace, my heart sank within me. A tall bearded porter, in appearance rather like a brigand and as grim as his surroundings, kept watch over the entrance. I remember whispering pleadingly:

"Oh, couldn't we live just by ourselves in a tiny place *anywhere* sooner than here?"

But unfortunately parental word was law in Casa Caetani, and we were not allowed to choose. My father-in-law gave me some rooms on the second floor, and there I spent seventeen consecutive winters.

In those days the Caetani family lived all together, and consisted of the Duke and Duchess of Sermoneta, five sons, and a married daughter who spent most of the year with her parents with her child and occasionally her husband.

The Duke was a giant, six feet six in his stockings, his eldest son, my husband, was six feet four, and the shortest of them all, Gelasio Caetani, my brother-in-law who recently became Italian Ambassador at Washington, measured six feet two. The Duke was a remarkably handsome old man, with a long white beard and curly gray locks that he wore long and in artistic disarray.

None of the family had any idea of time or tidiness, and the palace was in a chronic state of confusion and dust. From the day I entered it until the day I left I always saw workmen going about the place, carrying saws, hammers, and pots of paint; huge ladders were dragged up and down stairs by perspiring underlings, and loud shouting of directions, chiefly from the upper windows down to the courtyard, went on most of the day. But there was never any perceptible result; the dirt and disorder remained always the same and the family, far from being discouraged, regarded this state of things as a standing joke.

I remember the evening I arrived at Palazzo Caetani for the first time after my honeymoon at Frascati. Dusk was falling, dinner time approaching, and there was no sign of life anywhere in my part of the house. I sat in

the bedroom that had been allotted to me; my husband had been given one on another floor and so far off that I never really learned the quickest way to his room, as there were several staircases and innumerable passages. My dear old English nurse, Sizy, sat near me. She was very ruffled at having left beautiful Palazzo Colonna with all its luxuries and comforts, and not at all disposed to make the best of things.

Finally, when it had got quite dark, I suggested: "Supposing we rang the bell and asked the housemaid for some hot water?"

"There is no bell, there is no housemaid, there is no hot water in this house," was Sizy's gloomy retort, and the funny part of it is that it was absolutely true.

The old Duke was immensely rich and had huge properties in the Pontine Marshes, but he spent very little and his petty economies were proverbial in Rome. In later years he always went out on foot, so not to use his automobile, and was horrified at the idea of taking a cab. At the most, for very long distances, he boarded a tramcar. This trait he inherited from his father, the famous Duke Michelangelo, who became blind in his old age because he refused to be operated on for cataract by a first-class surgeon. He preferred the cheap services of a little country village man who contrived to put out both his eyes with clumsily executed operations. Duke Michelangelo always traveled third class, an unheard-of thing in those days, and when asked the reason, would reply: "Because there is no fourth class."

None of my family-in-law ever dressed for dinner and during that first winter when we lived all together I think I sat longer at the dining-room table than I ever

have since in my life. A bell rang before meals to summon us all, but no one ever dreamed of moving towards the dining room on hearing it, for the Caetanis merely considered it as a symptom that food might be expected before long. The story ran that the Duchess always said on hearing the luncheon bell: "That's nice, I still have time to go to the stables and see all the horses."

And so it was the Caetani custom to drop in for meals at any old time, and the first arrival, which was always myself, was obliged to wait until the very last had finished. I sometimes used to think my tired back would break in two. The Duchess used to come in one of the last, usually in a violet flannel dressing gown and waving an enormous paper fan, which seemed to me unnecessary as their rooms were bitterly cold.

Each member of the family had a semicircle of pickle bottles, patent medicines, sardine tins, etc., arranged round his plate, and these collections marked the place of each individual.

The food was served by an enormously fat man called Girolamo, who wore an old frock coat of the Duke's, and, owing to an impediment in his speech, spoke a language that no one could understand. He also was a standing joke in the family, and the extraordinarily silly things he did filled them with pure delight.

The Duke had a special Bologna sausage, smelling strongly of garlic, near his plate, and used to pare off thin slices that he presented in turn to members of the family as a great favor. I think he never really liked me after he discovered that I could not bear Bologna sausage. He was very clever and cultivated, and a most agreeable

"causeur"; so were all his children, so the conversation at meals was often very pleasant and entertaining.

Twice in the course of the winter the Duke appeared at dinner in evening dress, and this was a signal that he was going to call afterwards on the Queen Mother. On these occasions Girolamo invariably served him with a cup of extra-strong coffee, with the usual remark:

"If your Excellency is going to-night to visit her Majesty, he will need something to keep him awake!"

Even this delicate attention of Girolamo was not always efficacious, but the Queen Mother was genuinely attached to the Duke and never minded his nodding towards the end of the evening.

After several months of bad health, increased by want of comforts and my own ignorance as to what care to take of myself, my son Onorato Caetani was born on April 24, 1902, and we both were very ill indeed. Nursing was still rather a primitive affair in Rome in those days, and in Palazzo Caetani it had always been of the sketchiest description.

The Duchess had a great regard for an old surgeon, Professor Mazzoni, and no one but he was allowed to attend any member of the family, whatever was the matter with them. Professor Mazzoni had the greatest disdain for medicine, and was only interested in broken bones and things that could be put right with a knife, so as I had a delicate chest and suffered from bronchitis and asthma, I was not the patient of his choice at all.

He used to look me up when I was prostrate with one of my attacks and insist on kissing me and pulling my ear, which I disliked very much indeed. But beyond

examining the scent bottles on my dressing table and using my sprays vigorously on himself, he did nothing else. Fortunately, by just staying in bed and being looked after by my dear old English nurse, I always managed to recover without his help.

On looking back on that dreadful time I wonder how the baby and I survived at all. We slowly came back to life somehow, but not enough to assume the appearance of normally healthy human beings. It had been decreed by my husband and his mother that we were to stay on in Rome indefinitely that summer as Teano was kept there by the fact that he was obliged to manage the family estates for his father. But the poor baby drooped so in the heat, and I wept in such dreadful homesickness for England, that they got rather scared and decided that we were to be sent to my grandmother in London, and, incidentally have the interesting opportunity of seeing King Edward's coronation.

Never will I forget my joy and relief when I realized that I was to be allowed to leave! In spite of the long, hot, and dusty journey, we both revived as soon as we landed on blessed British soil.

At Dover the guard walked alongside the train giving bad news to us all: "The King is very ill," he said; "they have had to operate on him and the Coronation is put off indefinitely."

This dramatic announcement was a shock to every one, and total strangers entered into excited conversation. It seems the King had struggled on pluckily in spite of terrible pain, in hopes of getting through with the ceremony and not disappointing his subjects, and the public had no inkling of what was going on. But finally his life

was in danger, and an operation was hurriedly performed at the eleventh hour.

It was strange to arrive in London and see the decorations and flags, the quantities of stands covered with bunting that were erected all along what was to have been the route of the procession, and the enormous crowds in the streets. I remember every one stood about looking stunned, as though not knowing in which direction to turn their footsteps.

But for me to see my grandmother's barouche waiting at Victoria Station, with the two fat gray horses, the faithful coachman, Carrier, with his curly white wig, and inside the little old lady all smiles and waving a diminutive parasol, drove every other thought out of my head. The drive to Eaton Square where tea was served as usual in the big drawing-room, tea with all its attractiveness of old silver and dainties; the old servants coming in to have a look at the baby—all this was the cure I needed, and in a few days the buoyancy of my twenty-one years reasserted itself and I was myself once more.

In a few days we learned that the King was out of danger and progressing favorably, and that the Coronation would take place in August.

I must not forget "Uncle Augustus" Tollemache, who was staying with my grandmother at this time as he did for many months of the year. It was he who wrote the memoir of his sister, Mrs. William Locke, that I have already referred to, and who was, consequently, my grandmother's uncle.

He was born in 1815 and always seemed to me incredibly old with his snow-white hair and feeble gait. He was clever and cultivated, loving art and music and writ-

Augustus William Tollemache

The last of his generation, the brother of my great-grandmother, Mrs. Locke

ing little poems; he also had a sense of humor and we had many a good laugh together over the little jokes we shared. He outlived all his brothers and sisters and even my grandmother. When she died in 1906 in her house in Eaton Square, Uncle Augustus and I were the only relations present at her bedside, and the poor old man looked at me as it were across the hazy distance of a century and said, so sadly, "I have lived too long." When I arrived in Eaton Square with my baby he was very interested in seeing him and stroked his little head softly, saying: "Now, I have known seven generations." And he counted them up for me, beginning with his own grandmother, Lady Aldborough, and his mother, Lady Elizabeth Tollemache.

My grandmother and I decided not to stay in London for the Coronation; we all needed country air and I was very anxious to get to the beloved Norfolk of my childhood.

The postponement of the Coronation had been a terrible financial blow to my step-grandfather, Lord Walsingham. He owned the site in Piccadilly now occupied by the Ritz, and had built there a hotel which he called the Walsingham House. It was not a financial success, owing to the amateurishness of the whole enterprise, for he ran it with his old butler as manager, but for this occasion Walsingham had built stands on every available space and all the seats had been sold at large prices. He had counted on this to help him over a difficult moment, but when the Coronation was put off the ticket holders wanted their money back and Walsingham found himself in rather a bad way, not having insured against this unfortunate contingency.

When people were reassured about the King's health the social season went on in the usual way, and I had my first glimpse of London society. I had never seen any social life in London and I knew practically no one there as my father allowed me to go out only in Rome when I was a girl.

I went to an official party given by Lord and Lady Lansdowne, I think in honor of the Indian princes who had come to London for the Coronation. It was the first time that I had seen any, and I was much impressed by their brocade coats of exquisite colors, their sunset-like turbans, jeweled brooches, and enormous pearl necklaces. Our Duchessa d'Aosta was at that party, in the full splendor of her stately good looks, and it was there I made the acquaintance of the Italian Ambassador, Signor Pansa, and his wife, Donna Maria, whom I was to see so much of later on.

I wrote next day with youthful enthusiasm:

"Donna Maria is so good-looking and charming it is impossible to believe she is an ambassadress! I saw Lady Ashburton with a tiara of emeralds and diamonds of which each individual stone was bigger than her face!"

Mrs. Mackay, mother of Mr. Clarence Mackay, gave a musical party that season at her fine house in Carlton House Terrace, and as I knew her through her sister, Contessa Telfener, who was married in Rome, she kindly asked me to it. I remember that the program contained the names of what was best in the musical world at that time, Kubelik, Calvé, Plançon, Kirkby Lunn, and a new Italian tenor who had quite a success. I was told he was a coming man. He looked a typical Neapolitan, short and stout, with a black

mustache and a rolling eye. His name was Enrico Caruso!

At another party I met the Crown Princess of Roumania, then slim and lovely, and dancing like a fairy.

One day an American, Mrs. Ronalds, an old friend of my father's, took me with a party to the Crystal Palace, which amused me very much, in spite of the fact that we drove there in a landau and that the journey took about two hours. I made a note in my diary that I saw a "flying machine," I supposed on the Santos Dumont principle, and that I would very much have liked to try it, but it wasn't working yet! Motors were still a rarity, and of course taxis began a good bit later. I wonder when the word "taxi" came into use. We first called them "motor cabs," and it was considered rather dashing to charter one instead of a hansom.

It is curious that the telephone was in general use in Rome far sooner than it was in London. I remember as a child standing on a chair in Palazzo Colonna and talking by the hour to my little friends at the other end of the line; for in those days the mouthpiece was attached with the whole apparatus to the wall, and consequently was always either too high or too low for most people. Subscribers had no numbers, and their names and addresses were given to the exchange girls.

In London the telephone was adopted in private houses many years later; my grandmother never had it at all in Eaton Square, and electric light was almost as slow in coming in. All urgent messages were sent by telegram, and I used to come home to find a row of orange colored envelopes waiting for me on the hall table, and my grandmother in a twitter at the top of the stairs.

"Vittoria, dear," she used to call out, "I'm afraid some-

thing very dreadful must have happened. Eight telegrams have arrived for you."

I would soothe her by opening them quickly and showing her that they only contained invitations, but she never got rid of the impression that a telegram meant bad news; and the same little scene was enacted every day. She thought it all terribly modern, and when she heard of my driving in a hansom with a man friend it shocked her deeply. But she was more modern than her own mother, my great-grandmother Mrs. Locke, whom I remember as never having been in a hansom, or worn a heel to her shoe, in her life. Both things she considered much too dangerous!

When we returned to Palazzo Caetani at the end of a happy summer in the country in England, I employed my newly acquired health and energy to getting our rooms on the second floor into some kind of cleanliness and order. Eventually I made them quite nice, as they had more light than the bigger rooms on the *piano nobile*.

I was so unhappy at not having a dining room of my own that my husband was able to obtain permission from his parents for us to have our meals apart, and I turned a tiny room painted with old frescoes into a very quaint little dining room. Thus with more regular hours and the possibility of entertaining our friends, life became much pleasanter.

I immediately began receiving in a small and informal way, and during the following years until the War I think every foreigner of note who came to Rome passed through our tiny dining room. Many cheery evenings did we have, using the one fair-sized room for dancing and having supper in my bedroom!

In the early years of my married life the Diplomatic Corps in Rome was very brilliant. George von Lengerke Meyer was then American Ambassador and altogether one of the most popular and successful ones I have ever known. He and Mrs. Meyer rented a fine apartment in Prince Brancaccio's palazzo and entertained very lavishly during their several years in Rome. Everything was very well done, for Mrs. Meyer was a perfect hostess, superintending everything herself and managing all her invitations and correspondence without the help of a secretary.

Mr. Meyer had a variety of pleasant tastes. He hunted regularly with the Roman foxhounds and the Bracciano stag hounds. He drove his own car; I remember he took me down to our country place, Fogliano, in the Pontine Marshes, at what was then the record speed for the trip (this was in the very early days of automobiles). He danced well and loved shooting. He often went down to Fogliano for the duck shooting, which he thoroughly enjoyed.

In those days their daughters, Julia and Alice, were children, and their only son, George, was a great friend of my youngest brother-in-law, Michelangelo. Those two boys, who were then about twelve or thirteen years old, were perfect terrors. As far as I can remember their only way of descending the staircase at Palazzo Caetani was on bicycles, so that the inhabitants of the house risked their lives daily going upstairs, which they accomplished by clinging closely to the wall and hoping for the best.

But the funniest thing George and Michelangelo did was when the President of the French Republic, then Mr. Loubet, came on an official visit to the King of Italy.

The Colonna gardens afford a very fine view of the entrance to the Quirinal, and the boys asked my father's permission to go there to view the procession. At that time relations between France and the Pope were very strained; in fact the French Legation to the Vatican had lately been abolished.

Those terrible boys thought of nothing better than hanging over the garden terrace and hissing the French President as he passed, simply out of high spirits. This was interpreted as a political demonstration, and when it was discovered that the hostile demonstrators were actually in the private grounds of the Prince Assistant to the Holy See, the horror and scandal of the authorities knew no bounds. My father was summoned to appear before the police, but needless to say he refused to move and sent his business man to represent him. Meanwhile there were fiery articles in the newspapers next day. The police authorities harangued my father's representative, and when finally he could get a word in edgeways he explained all. The dangerous political agitators were the small sons of the American Ambassador and the Duke of Sermoneta, "Senator of the Reign," and they had already been suitably chastised by their parents. The police collapsed, and all proceedings were abandoned.

The two Austrian Embassies were very gay. Count Henry Lutzow was accredited to the Quirinal and lived at Palazzo Chigi; Count Czescen, who was accredited to the Vatican, occupied the beautiful Palazzo di Venezia, which has been taken back by the Italian Government since the War.

There was a good deal of friendly rivalry over social prominence between the two Embassies and the result

was a succession of charming dinners and balls and other entertainments, which were very agreeable for Roman society. They also made a point of securing the most attractive young men as their attachés and secretaries, and all this helped to make Rome very gay during the last years before the War. Countess Lutzow and Countess Szescen were both admirable hostesses.

We were all the best of friends, but clouds were already beginning to gather on the political horizon, and every now and then demonstrations against Austria used to take place in front of the Embassies.

One day—in 1911—I called on Countess Lutzow and found a hooting rabble in the Corso, in front of Palazzo Chigi. I went upstairs all the same and was shown into an empty drawing-room. While I was waiting for my hostess to appear the noise in the street seemed to grow louder, and I could not resist the temptation of going to the window to see what was happening. This was foolish of me, for the sight of my face annoyed the crowd and instantly a missile was hurled that broke the window and fell on the carpet at my feet. It was a huge potato! I hastily retreated and sat at the farthest end of the room. At that moment the Ambassador entered and, after shaking hands, exclaimed: "Dear me, what a noise!" and went to the window to look out. As he gazed for a minute or two in silence I had a wild hope that he would not notice the broken window, though he was looking straight through a large jagged star. But he finally saw it, likewise the potato on the floor, and was extremely cross. He came towards me with the potato in his hand and shook it severely at me.

"What a country!" he said. "They throw potatoes at

Embassy windows! I will immediately take this to the Foreign Office and show it to Tittoni."

Which he did; but I never knew with what result.

All the same Count Henry Lutzow was a very good friend to Italy, where he had spent so many years of his life, and he smoothed away lots of rough corners in the relations between the two countries. When he left it was a great loss for all of us, not only socially, for his successor, Herr Merey, who was of the bureaucratic official type, did not fill his place at all. The situation immediately became more strained and socially the Austrian Embassy existed no longer.

We personally broke off official relations with Austria two years before the War, in a rather curious manner.

My husband, who was much interested in politics and was for some time in Parliament, wrote an article in a leading newspaper against Italy's alliance with Austria, and this article aroused the fury of Herr Merey, who decreed that henceforth Prince and Princess di Teano would no longer be received at the Austrian Embassy.

It appears we were in disgrace three months before we discovered it, as the hospitality of Palazzo Chigi was then very different from what it had been in Count Lutzow's day, and no noticeable entertaining went on there. Then a young attaché of the Austrian Embassy, Comte S., who had just received the news of his appointment to another post, decided to give a farewell ball at the Grand Hotel. We were not invited, and we failed to notice the fact. I knew him very little and there was no particular reason why he should ask us. But the youth, who did not shine in the way of brains, instead of keeping quiet and obeying his Ambassador's orders without attracting

any attention to the matter, began to go about telling every one in Rome that he had not been able to ask us to his party because his Ambassador had forbidden it; he regretted it, but we were taboo at the Embassy!

This stirred up a regular hornets' nest, and all the young men of Rome banded together and said as they considered this statement to be an insult to Italy they would not attend the ball. Herr Merey realized that he had made a *gaffe* in trying to wage war for political reasons against a representative Roman and one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, so he lost his nerve. At the last moment I received a very humble letter from Comte S., saying that by an inexcusable misunderstanding our invitation to his ball had gone astray, and that he hoped my husband and I would come. I answered, thanking, but alleging a previous engagement, and there the matter ended.

Herr Merey used to try to bow rather anxiously whenever he met me, but my eyes were always fixed on a point a few inches above his head.

Soon afterwards we were invited to an official dinner at the Foreign Office, given by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Marchese di San Giuliano. All the ambassadors were present and the Austrian Ambassador and I seemed fated to be always bumping into each other. He complained bitterly to a colleague that he had never meant the *brouille* to go as far as not bowing, he simply meant not to receive us, and this subtle distinction seemed to make the story still funnier.

Next winter all the nice Austrians at the Embassy, Prince and Princess Lichtenstein, Comte and Comtesse Thurn, and others began calling on me again. I was

very glad to see them as they were all quite charming, but I could not resist a little chaff. "How is it that you are allowed to associate with me this year?" I asked.

"Oh!" they said, "we just decided to do as we liked. Nous n'en pouvons plus de ce petit rond de Cuir!"

And then the War came and swept them all out of Rome. But I must now go back to earlier years.

CHAPTER V

THE SUNSET OF A GOLDEN AGE, I

IN the spring of 1903 I was appointed Dama di Palazzo to the Queen of Italy, which for political reasons annoyed my father very much.

Fortunately it was done very quickly and by the time he got to know of it the appointment was already *un fait accompli,* so beyond scolding me severely for not having consulted him in the matter there was nothing more for him to do. My father argued that as he held the hereditary charge of Prince Assistant to the Holy See, it was a want of consideration on my part to accept an appointment at the King's Court, which placed me officially in the White camp. He pointed out how absurd it was not to be able to invite me to his house when he gave an official reception.

On the other hand, my new family not only was White but violently anti-clerical, and my father-in-law, who had been greatly devoted to the late King Humbert and was a personal friend of the Queen Mother, would never have allowed me to refuse the appointment. So I found myself between two fires of family arguments.

I have always been thankful that my father's political feelings were not able to influence the matter, as it has been a great joy and honor to be at the service of my Queen, whose affectionate kindness has never failed me in all these years.

But not long afterwards Leo XIII died and the new

Pope, Piux X, had very different ideas and gave no importance to the Black and White distinctions that had divided Roman society for so many years. Consequently he granted a collective family audience to my father with his daughters and their husbands. After I had been thus received by the Pope, my father was pacified and felt he could also receive me, even on official occasions!

Soon after my appointment at Court the Kaiser and the Crown Prince of Germany came to Rome on an official visit, and I started Court duties at the Quirinal for the first time. According to the usual etiquette, the King and his suite drove through the gayly decorated streets to the station to meet the Kaiser, while the Queen and her ladies-in-waiting stood in the *Sala dei Corazzieri,* the long hall at the top of the staircase, to receive the royal guest on his arrival.

I remember that while we waited the Queen lectured her ladies on the necessity of being extremely serious and dignified during their presentation to the Emperor and his suite. It seemed that during the last royal visit—that of an Eastern potentate—the King had noticed a certain amount of smiling and giggling in the groups of the Queen's ladies, which had been a contrast to her Majesty's extreme seriousness and dignity. He had requested her to tell them that this was not to occur again. Her lecture had the desired effect, for on that occasion and on all similar ones during this long stretch of years I have always noticed that the Court ladies looked preternaturally solemn.

The Kaiser's arrival was a very magnificent affair, though somewhat theatrical. His suite consisted of about

thirty officers, all at least seven feet high and wearing very gorgeous uniforms. Their appearance was more impressive than their conversation, for I remember struggling hard to find some topic which would go, when I had some of those beautiful creatures near me at lunch and dinner. But beyond a few stock phrases nothing could be extracted from them.

On the other hand, the Kaiser and the Crown Prince were of quite another style, full of conversation and jokes, and it seemed to me that the royal visit went off very merrily.

The official reception given by the Mayor of Rome at the Capitol was a very grand affair. The beautiful Palaces on the three sides of the Piazza were linked together on this occasion by specially built covered bridges, so that space was practically unlimited. The museum of statues was also thrown open and looked wonderfully well, all brilliantly illuminated.

My uncle, Prince Prospero Colonna, younger brother of my father, was then Mayor of Rome, and though we all solemnly paraded arm-in-arm through the many halls, between serried lines of bowing guests, all sorts of little jokes were being whispered from one exalted personage to another in the procession. Finally, while all the guests remained outside, the royal party was conducted to the little room where stands enshrined the gem of the Capitol Museum: the Venus Capitolina, and which for the occasion had been specially lit with rose-colored lights.

The papers of the next day reported that the Mayor of Rome had attracted the Kaiser's attention to this world-famous masterpiece, and that the visiting Monarch, much impressed, had remained some time in silent admiration

before it. What really happened and what I heard was this:

My uncle said: "Your Majesty, may I present my official wife?" And the Kaiser, putting his hands on his knees, doubled up in roars of schoolboy laughter.

Meanwhile I was having quite an amusing time in the background with the Crown Prince, who had developed a childish admiration for me and was nervously tugging at my dress and whispering: "I've got a rose in my helmet for you; I've been keeping it all the evening. Can I pass it to you now? But for goodness sake don't let Papa see us!"

The feat was successfully performed without King, Queen, or Emperor finding out our behavior!

How undreamed of was the War in those days! The great Court banquet ended with the most cordial speeches pronounced by the King and the Kaiser, and everybody's health was drunk.

The Kaiser's speech, being in German, was lost on me, but I remember distinctly the last words, spoken in excellent Italian:

"Bevo al bel sole d'Italia, e al gentile popolo italiano!" ("I drink to the beautiful sun of Italy, and to the charming Italian people!")

The Crown Prince remained in Rome for a few days after the Kaiser's official visit had ended, and he spent his coming-of-age birthday in Rome. In those days he was a nice boy, extremely young for his age, with a "gutter-snipe" face which inspired gayety. He celebrated his birthday with a dinner given at the German Embassy at Palazzo Caffarelli, which now exists no more, having been pulled down during the War. He had stipulated

that he was to ask only the people he wanted to ask and no "duties." My husband and I were invited, but I do not remember that it was a particularly amusing evening. After that I never saw the Crown Prince again, but he continued to write to me and send little gifts for some time after he left Rome. I find among my papers this letter from Herr von Jagow, who was then Ambassador in Rome and later Prime Minister in Berlin during the War:

Kaiserlich Deutsche Botschaft
Palazzo Caffarelli
Rome
ce Vendredi

Madame,

Voici l'adresse que vous m'avez demandé:
Seiner Kaiserlichen und
Königlichen Hoheit
dem Kronprinzen des Deutschen Reichs
und von Preussen
Potsdam

Cela vous paraîtra un peu long et barbare, mais vous vous y habituerez vite, car le petit Prince est un bon épistolier et ne permettra pas à votre plume de sécher.

Mille hommages

Jagow

The next time I saw the Kaiser was in Norway when the steamer I was touring on anchored near his yacht in the port of Odde. He found out that my husband and I were on board and sent for us to come to tea with him, entertaining us most cordially. I must say he was the only German I ever met who was agreeable and light of hand. His spirits were rather too boisterous.

There was an old gentleman on board the royal yacht who had been very friendly with my father-in-law in the past and was therefore interested in meeting us. When the moment came for us to leave he had wandered off and was not to be found. The Emperor yelled for him and search parties were organized. Finally he came hurrying along the deck of the *Hohenzollern*.

"Hurry up!" said the Emperor, "they are just off." And he aimed a kick at the old gentleman, nearly precipitating him down the companion. This mark of imperial condescension convulsed his suite.

I saw the Kaiser again in London in May, 1911, when he and the Kaiserin and their daughter visited King George and Queen Mary.

The ball in their honor at Buckingham Palace was a very magnificent affair and the Kaiserin was evidently got up for great effect. She certainly looked extremely well. Her white hair was well arranged and she wore crimson velvet with an exceptionally long train. As she sat on the royal dais it covered a considerable part of it and swept over the edge on to the parquet floor beneath, getting in the way of all the other royalties, but certainly making her a very prominent figure.

On the occasion of this royal visit the monument to the late Queen Victoria, in front of Buckingham Palace, was unveiled. I had seats with some friends quite close to it, and it was an impressive sight when the gates of Buckingham Palace opened and the King and Queen, Kaiser and Kaiserin, Queen Alexandra and a host of minor royalties all streamed out together. In the light of subsequent events it is curious to remember them all very

"chummy" on that lovely summer morning, chatting together, and the best of friends!

But to return to the official royal visits in Rome.

A week after the Kaiser's in 1903 came the late King Edward's, and I was then presented for the first time to him who for several years afterwards, in fact until his death, gave me so many proofs of kindly friendliness, and whom I always remember with the utmost devotion.

King Edward's official visit was utterly different from the Kaiser's. There were no theatrical effects of gigantic officers and glittering uniforms: the keynote was simplicity with impressive personal dignity. His suite numbered only seven, and among them were Lord Hardinge (afterwards Viceroy of India), Sir Frederick Ponsonby, and Sir Hedworth Lambton (now Lord Meux); and a more charming group of typical British gentlemen it would be hard to find.

King Edward was not in very good health that year and found the heat of the opera house on gala nights very trying. In fact, one of his suite told me he nearly collapsed on reaching the privacy of his room after one performance. But his splendid pluck carried him through, and no word of complaint ever let our King and Queen or any one else know of his fatigue and discomfort.

He was particularly gracious to me on learning who I was, as he had been a friend of my grandmother's and had often stayed at Lord Walsingham's country place in Norfolk when he was Prince of Wales.

So the first evening at the Quirinal King Edward asked me to come and sit near him after dinner and spoke to me for a long time about my English relations. I was very young then and rather shy as I had only just been

appointed at Court, but his wonderfully courtly manner put me at my ease. He ended by saying:

"I would so like your photograph as I have always been such friends with your people. I wonder if you have one you can spare me?"

Later a member of his suite told me that the King had said very nice things to him about my personal appearance, and had added: "But it runs in the family, for her grandmother and her mother were two of the loveliest women I have ever seen."

In the summer of that year, 1903, I went as usual to London to stay with my grandmother, for happily it was now an understood thing in the Caetani family that I should be allowed to continue this habit of all my life. An American friend, Mrs. John Drexel, whom I had met in Rome in the winter and had come across again in London, suggested our going together to the Ascot races and there I met King Edward for the second time. As soon as he recognized me in the crowd he came down to speak to me and asked me to come up and lunch with his party. I remember he placed me on his right hand. This was the beginning of my first real London season. I made new friends at every step and invitations simply rained, and after that I "did" the season for six weeks every year up to the time of the War.

The memory of King Edward remains as a golden ray in my picture of English life, and I am glad I saw the last years of his reign, for with his passing something died which can never return. He had the grand manner of Louis XIV: the tact, the courtesy, and the same enjoyment of the best things of life as *le Roi Soleil*. Knowing

this, people offered him their best and were glad to have it to give.

For him, the beloved sovereign and guest, were the most beautiful old houses, the most perfect of English gardens, the priceless pictures, the massive gold and silver plate. The best orchestras played softly throughout dinner, the most exquisite food was served in royal profusion. England's most delicious fruit, peaches, nectarines, white and purple grapes, scented raspberries, and gigantic strawberries were displayed before him. England's roses and her sweet peas, her carnations and her lilies were massed in his path. The loveliest women in England decked themselves in their most carefully chosen dresses and their most beautiful jewels to meet him. For King Edward, only the best was good enough, and the best was joyfully provided. It was the luxury that money alone could never buy, for it was the luxury created and concentrated by centuries of blessed British ease and prosperity: the luxury of fastidious selection of the best.

I can still see King Edward at the state balls at Buckingham Palace, leading out his partner in the opening *quadrille d'honneur*. I do not think any other man could walk through a quadrille with so much courtly grace as he did. Sometimes he wore gorgeous uniforms, sometimes a kilt, sometimes Court dress with breeches and the diamond Order of the Garter sparkling on his shapely leg, but the effect was always the same.

In those days quadrilles were still danced at balls in Italy; therefore I was one of the few people in London who knew all the figures and could go through them without a hitch. Whenever I was summoned to take part in the royal quadrille this knowledge of mine made me

very popular with my partner, who was thankful to be pushed and pulled through the ordeal, for there was nothing King Edward disliked more than seeing people make a muddle of the stately dance. And, on the other hand, as it was never performed anywhere else except at State balls, naturally no one remembered its intricacies.

Talking of this, I remember a rather amusing incident that occurred one year. I received my invitation to the Buckingham Palace ball together with a special *entrée* card which gave me the right to go in by a private entrance reserved for "big-wigs," thus avoiding the crowd of other guests.

On the morning of the ball a special messenger came from Court to tell me that I was to take part in the opening royal quadrille—a very great honor—and that I was on no account to be late. In the afternoon a second messenger came with a large card on which the names of the people taking part in the royal quadrille were printed, together with their respective positions round the room. My partner was to be H.R.H. the Duke of Connaught, brother to King Edward.

When evening came I adorned myself with my best frock and jewels and sent for a humble "four-wheeler," as my extremely small allowance did not permit me to hire a carriage when in London. But as I approached Buckingham Palace an enormous crowd blocked the streets, gala coaches were passing with coachmen in white wigs and groups of powdered footmen hanging on behind, every sort of smart carriage rolled by, and the policemen were quite firm in not letting me pass. I parleyed with one through the window of my dusty "growler," showing him my *entrée* card, my voice shak-

ing with fear at not being in time for the quadrille, which would have been too dreadfully rude for words.

The policeman was an angel to me, as they have always been, bless them.

"Well," he said, "no one is allowed to drive through the *entrée* gate in a cab and" (this with a certain tone of mild rebuke) "I don't know that any one has ever tried, but it isn't nice for a lady to walk all alone through this crowd with her pretty jewels on, so I'll take you along."

So I skipped out of my four-wheeler and clung to the policeman's arm; he swam along, making a way through the mob with his other arm and got me into the precincts of Buckingham Palace. I remember running breathlessly up the stairs and reaching the ballroom just as the gentlemen-in-waiting were beginning to hunt for me all over the place.

I was subjected to a lot of teasing over this incident, but I found one fellow sufferer. Lord Kitchener told me that he also tried to drive through the *entrée* gate in a cab and was stopped by the police. But he was a big strong man and able to get through the crowd far more easily than I could.

King Edward loved racing, and his bridge after dinner. In his later years when I knew him he also liked a game of croquet, which gave him a certain amount of gentle exercise. He was not at all a good player, and it was rather difficult to find people bad enough to play against him, so that he should sometimes have the pleasure of winning.

I once spent a few days at Sir Ernest Cassel's place at Newmarket, Moulton Paddocks, when the King was also

a guest there, and croquet was played every evening after the races. When it was found out that I had not played since I was a child, my services were immediately required as the King's adversary, and I did my duty nobly, missing the easiest hoops and keeping him therefore in the best of tempers.

One day, though, I felt desperate and gave a mighty smack with my ball; it flew across the ground, straight through the right hoop (I didn't even know it was the right one!) and, continuing its glorious career, hit the King's ball straight into the rose bushes. But by the icy stillness that followed I realized that never, never was such a thing to occur again.

I remember a week-end party at Mr. Alfred Rothschild's place, Holton, the King again being chief guest.

Mr. Alfred was a darling little old gentleman with two big white curls on either side of his face and the most gentle manners imaginable. Everything at Holton was most carefully thought out for the comfort of his guests. He had a fleet of little pony carriages, each driven by a diminutive groom, and their mission was to follow any one walking in the gardens so that they could get in whenever they felt tired. I went for a stroll with a young man of the party and we tried our best to lose the pony carriage that was pursuing us, but with no success. We raced up every flight of steps we could find, but there was always a path which the pony could trot up, and he would reappear a few seconds later at our heels; after trying hard for some time and being reduced to hysterics we gave up the struggle.

A servant made the round of the guests' rooms before dinner inquiring whether they wanted tea or coffee for

breakfast. On my saying, "Tea, please," he asked gravely:

"Indian or China, my lady?"

"China, I think," I answered, diffidently.

"Does your ladyship prefer Orange Pekoe, Lapsang Suchong, or Oolong?"

But I was absolutely bewildered and fastened on to the last name on the list as a drowning man clings to a straw.

In the bathroom I found an array of at least twenty-five different kinds of bath-salts and fifty bottles of various scented toilet waters.

"Hooray!" I said to myself, "little Alfred pays for all this!" And I filled my bath with generous samples of the whole lot. I was punished, for my skin was nearly burnt off and I came out of that bath like a boiled lobster!

Alfred Rothschild was devoted to animals, and it amused him to train them and then give an exhibition to his friends in a miniature circus he had built for the purpose. I don't know really that he trained them himself; in any case they never seemed to do anything in particular. The story went that once a white rabbit turned on him, and Alfred was so scared after that he had every animal doped before a performance. Anyhow on that occasion we were ushered into the circus after dinner, and King Edward sat comfortably smoking his big cigar. I was placed near him. The other guests and, I think, the servants of the party completed the audience.

The circus was a very luxurious affair, with a good deal of gilding in the decorations and a fine Aubusson carpet spread all over the ring. Alfred Rothschild stood in the middle cracking his little whip and shaking his

white curls. Little ponies trotted in, went round the ring once, and then trotted out again. Some doves were let out of a cage and refused to do anything at all. The cats were even more supercilious. This went on for half an hour; the King had his eyes half shut and I think most of us had fallen into a comfortable stupor. Only Alfred Rothschild was having a lovely time.

Then a little dog rushed on the scene and assumed a curious attitude in the middle of the ring. I must say at once that I am extremely shortsighted. I fumbled for my eyeglass, exclaiming gayly: "Do look, Sir! Here is at last an animal that can do something!"

"Hush, my dear child!" said the King in an undertone, "that is exactly what is occurring. . . ."

And how he laughed! One chuckle after another shook him all over, and he continued long after an enormous powdered footman in plush breeches had entered the ring and tidied everything up with a golden shovel.

King Edward very much disliked people having different tastes from his own, and it was not usual in his set for any one to do anything he did not approve of. When I developed a passion for ballooning, of which I will speak later on, it really annoyed him quite seriously, and no one could understand why I persisted on an amusement which he had qualified as foolish.

One rather curious story I must tell because it is so characteristic of his unfailing kindness towards me.

A certain Mrs. A., young and beautiful, came to Rome in the course of the winter of 1904, and we made each other's acquaintance. She told me her husband had a country place near Windsor and invited me to stay there

The picture gallery in my old home;
Palazzo Colonna

in June for the Ascot races. I accepted and came over to London to stay with my grandmother as usual about the beginning of June.

Then, the day before Ascot, I got a telegram from Mrs. A. saying that she regretted extremely, but owing to her grandmother's serious illness she was obliged to put off her party. I was terribly disappointed. In those days Ascot amused me very much, and at that late hour it was not likely that I would get an invitation to another house party, while to go down from London daily was not at all nice. However, I decided to go down by train on the first day of the meeting, just to see all my friends, and then probably not go again.

When the King saw me he came to speak to me, and I, in all innocence, told him how sad it was that Mrs. A., with whom I had been going to stay, had been obliged to throw over her party because of her old grandmother.

Queen Alexandra, ever gracious, sent for me and kept me in the royal stand by her side for some time. When I joined the crowd in the enclosure again, my escorts were the Austrian Ambassador and the Portuguese Minister, Marquis de Soveral, who took turns in looking after me all day, and more charming company could not be desired; so altogether in spite of my disappointment I had a very pleasant time. When I returned to my London home, there on the hall table was a telegram from Mrs. A., saying that her grandmother had recovered and would I go to their place at Windsor the next day. So the following morning I went again to Ascot and had early lunch with a friend in the Guards' tent, which meal I always remember, because on my return to the enclosure the King sent to ask me to have lunch with *him*. It was im-

possible to refuse, and I did not like to say that I had already lunched, and so with the last fat strawberry sticking in my throat I started another full course meal which my young and healthy appetite helped me to get through without disaster!

I told his Majesty the joyful news of the recovery of Mrs. A.'s grandmother, and though he smiled enigmatically and said nothing I did not have an inkling of what had really occurred until later in the day a friend who was "in the know" told me the whole story. It seems that the year before Mrs. A. had been extremely anxious to be asked to the ball at Windsor Castle, and as she was a very beautiful woman but not very brilliant she thought the best plan would be to stand about as near the King as possible during the whole of the Ascot race meeting, so as to be noticed by him, and so eventually get the longed-for invitation. But this deep scheme produced the opposite effect. King Edward disliked being stared at, and when the following year the names of people who had applied for tickets for the royal enclosure at Ascot were submitted to him, he quietly gave instructions that Mrs. A.'s application should be refused.

It is necessary to explain here, for the benefit of non-English readers, that though, of course, any one can attend Ascot races by buying a ticket for one of the many excellent stands and frequenting the paddock where all the interest of the races is centered, no one can enter the royal enclosure who is not received at Court, or who has for some reason fallen into disfavor there. The Lord Chamberlain examines all requests for admittance, which have to be made at least a month beforehand, and if the applicants are approved of they receive a printed form

with which it is then possible for them to buy their ticket for the meeting.

Poor Mrs. A.! What could she do but give up her party? It was impossible for her to see all her friends entering the sacred precincts and remain herself hanging over the palings of the paddock! But this is the nice part of the story: When the King heard I was to have been one of her guests he said that altered the case, and Mrs. A. could then be allowed to enter the enclosure. So some one wired to her straight from the course, saying that if she came the next day she would be given her pass at the entrance gate. And thus we met there the second day and went back to her country house together. The grandmother was never referred to, and I often wondered if she ever existed! I felt very sorry for Mrs. A. as she was evidently terrified at being seen by the King and kept well to the other end of the enclosure all the time; but I remember Count Mensdorff was very kind in going back to look for her and walking her about a bit, which was then enough to send up any woman's shares!

Talking of racing makes me think of the old Duchess of Devonshire, who was a great personage in King Edward's set, and attended every race meeting. She was very old when I knew her and very stiffly corseted. Her face was highly colored and wore the fixed expression of a mask. I was very frightened of her, but fascinated at the same time, as I had heard so much of her wonderful beauty and charm, so I used to study her from as near as I could to see if I could discover any traces of them.

At the races she always sat on a bench like a stone image, quite immovable and stupendously dignified.

One day I was rewarded by seeing her pull up her skirt and produce a purse from a bag secreted among her petticoats. "Put two pounds for me on Cream Tart," she said to one of her satellites. It sounded like the voice of an oracle, and it impressed me so much that it is the only name of a race horse I can remember.

Only once was King Edward angry with me, and that was entirely due to a misunderstanding.

We received an invitation from Queen Alexandra and himself to stay at Windsor Castle for the Ascot races. It is needless to say how honored and pleased we would have been to do so, as this invitation is eagerly sought for by many and bestowed on few. But my mother's health at that moment was causing me great anxiety, and I could not leave Rome. I answered to that effect and received immediately a kind letter from the King, who was always the most courteous and punctual of letter writers:

Buckingham Palace
May 18th

DEAR PRINCESS DI TEANO,

I am indeed sorry that you and your husband will be unable to pay us a visit next month at Windsor Castle for Ascot races, but quite understand and appreciate the reasons you give for this determination.

Trusting that your Mother will recover her health,
Believe me
Very sincerely yours
EDWARD R.

A few days later I found it necessary to go to England on business connected with my mother's illness, and my

dear little friend Maudie Ashley at once asked me for a week-end party at Broadlands, her husband's beautiful family place. I was glad to get two days of English country air, and when she told me that the King and Queen were coming over to lunch on the Sunday I was still more pleased, for I thought I would have an opportunity of thanking their Majesties once more for their gracious invitation. But when the King caught sight of me as he entered the drawing-room I saw at once that he was very much annoyed. He frowned as he shook hands, and said, very curtly:

"I see, Princess, that you are able to visit *other people,* but not me!" And he turned away abruptly before I had time to explain that I had only come to England on business and was leaving for Rome the next day.

He did not speak to me again that afternoon and I left England feeling very miserable. It was already hard enough being obliged to forego my usual delightful stay in London.

When after some weeks my mother's state of health improved, I was able to return to England. Mrs. Willie James asked me to meet his Majesty at dinner, but I had been so frightened by his severity at Broadlands that I didn't dare to accept until I found out how the land lay between us. I asked a friend to find out for me, and she wrote me most reassuringly. She had seen the King and spoken of me; he had said that he was so glad my mother had recovered and that he was looking forward to meeting me at dinner at Mrs. Willie James's, so I was most certainly to go and all would be well.

When I met the King he was more charming than ever, and the little incident was quite forgotten.

CHAPTER VI

THE SUNSET OF A GOLDEN AGE, II

IN June of 1904 I attended a Court in London, and the kindness of the Italian Ambassadress, Donna Maria Pansa, made this delightfully easy for me, as she lent me a beautiful mauve velvet train of her own and took me to Buckingham Palace herself.

All the ceremonial interested me very much as it was so different from any we have at the Quirinal. After we had waited for some time in one of the drawing-rooms, a roll of drums and the sound of "God Save the King" announced the arrival of their Majesties in the big ballroom next door. Lady Lansdowne, as Mistress of the Robes, was the first to file past, followed by the Diplomatic Corps, and as I was with the Italian Ambassadress we passed through together, performed our deep curtseys successfully, and then took our places on the seats reserved for diplomatists, on the left-hand side of the throne.

That evening was spoilt for me by a small tragedy. I had lost my eyeglasses! So I sat for hours seeing what appeared to be all the women of England file past, and wondering whether they were beauties or monsters. All I could see were pink, blue, yellow, green, gold, and silver trains, sliding past as links of an enormous chain, and the King and Queen bowing graciously to each one for over two hours. When I had given up all hope

of it ever ending, the chain of many colored links suddenly broke; the King rose and took the Queen by the hand, the band played "God Save the King," and their Majesties walked slowly out of the room.

Count Mensdorff came and looked for me and took me in to supper. They had told him to take in an Ambassadress, but he had answered that as the youngest Ambassador in the world he wanted to have supper with whom he liked. In those days Albert Mensdorff was the *enfant gaté* of London.

It was in the same gay season that the Prince and Princess of Wales, now of course King George and Queen Mary, gave a lovely party at Marlborough House. It was quite a tiny affair, of only about a hundred and fifty guests, and the Prince and Princess received them speaking to each one with the greatest simplicity and charm. I think we danced in an improvised ballroom built out in the garden, or perhaps it was the supper room that was the temporary affair; I only remember that the Prince of Wales made me sit near him at supper, and that Queen Alexandra, gracious and lovely, and *so* gay, sat on his other side. They began to tease me about an enormous latchkey that fell out of my bag. In my grandmother's old-fashioned house Yale locks were unknown, and I had had considerable difficulty in making the butler trust me with a huge and ancient key. Anyhow, it caused great amusement at the supper table, and the Queen seized it and hung it on her shoulder amid her many decorations.

At our table were the Duchess of Westminster (Sheila) then at the height of her beauty, Lady Cynthia Graham,

the Aga Khan and the German Ambassador, Count Metternich.

In those days I loved balls and dancing, and how often I remember coming back to the old house in Eaton Square in the bright morning sunlight, with all the sparrows twittering in the trees, my arms full of cotillion favors and the chiffon flounces on my long skirt all torn to shreds! I thought nothing then of going out to dinner in broad daylight and returning when the sun had already risen, having seen the night through!

How many, many parties I seem to remember!

A gay fancy dress one was given at Claridge's Hotel, by Lord Winterton and F. E. Smith, now risen to celebrity as Lord Birkenhead. I think in those days they both were bachelors. Lord Winterton was dressed as a French policeman and F. E. Smith as rather a dandified Marquis, all in white satin and powder. It was in the early days of the Russian ballet, when people went mad about "Les Sylphides," and an exquisite pair of these fairies, with short tulle skirts, little wings and rose-wreaths in their hair, were "Nancy" Astor, at present Lady Astor and a Member of Parliament, and Lady Lytton, now the mother of such lovely daughters. They joined hands and danced gracefully round dear old Lord Chaplin, who looked at them with a gracious smile, murmuring, "The darlings, the darlings!"

I was a rather fanciful Empress Theodora, in red velvet with a gold crown, and a lily in my hand simply because I liked its perfume. I don't know why I called myself Theodora at all! The Grenfell twins, so well known as polo players, and both fated to be killed in

the Great War, were dressed exactly alike as Toreadors and were quite indistinguishable one from the other.

Count Felix Elsten, now Prince Youssoupoff, was there, and no one dreamed that the handsome, quiet youth would one day leap into notoriety as one of Rasputin's murderers! He wore a marvelous Russian costume of gold brocade and dark sables, and scintillated with the priceless Youssoupoff jewels. Lady de Grey arrived with him, also wearing Russian dress, and together they made a very striking pair. Every one was very gay and at supper the French policeman, Lord Winterton, arrested—after a great struggle—a couple of dangerous apaches who turned out to be Mrs. Cecil Higgins and Lord Duncannon, now Lord Bessborough.

Mrs. Arthur Paget, who later on became Lady Paget, was an old friend of my grandmother's and I think one of the very few Americans she had ever met. I think Lord Walsingham had met Miss Minnie Stevens years ago in America, and afterwards when she married Arthur Paget and settled in England, he had introduced her to his wife and she had called at Eaton Square. My grandmother always said her beauty was quite remarkable. When I first began to go about in London she was still handsome and entertained a great deal.

I remember a large dinner at her house in Belgrave Square where I met for the first time the Marlboroughs, the Roxburghs, the Cadogans, the Aga Khan and many others who were all to become friends of mine later on. Bridge was already the craze in those days and every one settled to the game the minute the men came up from the dining room. As I did not play I sat and talked the whole evening to the Aga Khan who was the

only other non-player besides myself. He told me a good many interesting things about his country and himself, and we laid the foundations of a friendship that has now lasted a great many years.

In those days I complained of bridge and found it spoilt parties, little dreaming what a bridge fiend I was to become myself in after years!

It was soon afterwards that Mrs. Arthur Paget had the terrible accident which nearly cost her her life. Owing to the defective working of a gate she fell down the shaft of the lift in her own house, breaking both her legs, one with the most dreadful of compound fractures, and sustaining several other serious injuries as well. As she steadfastly refused to have her leg amputated, she underwent one serious operation after another at the hands of most of the leading surgeons of Europe, enduring agonies of pain for years. I often went to call and found her looking very lovely in a pink draped bed in a darkened room, surrounded by the most exquisite flowers and fruit sent to her by her many friends. Though after several years she reached the point of being able to walk with the help of two sticks, she was never herself again, but she continued to entertain indefatigably, though always lame and suffering, till she finally died, at the Ritz in Paris—perhaps as she would have wished to—rather suddenly.

On one occasion during a London season of many years ago I was invited to a huge dinner party at which my place was forgotten owing, I believe, to the mistake of a secretary. I was only rather embarrassed, chiefly for my hostess, as it always seems to me impossible to take offense where no offense is meant, but the incident

created quite a *potin* at the time and everybody talked about it. A great personage was supposed to have said, "If people don't know how to receive, they shouldn't try to!"

I now find the anecdote recounted in full—but without the names which, of course, I will never divulge—in a very amusing book published anonymously this year and called *The Top Drawer*. I spotted the author at once, a witty friend to whom I had told the story at the time and who has implored me to preserve his incognito. I have warned him that I am going to reproduce his version of the affair, as it is funnier than my own, and quite as accurate; only at the end has his poetic fancy rather soared away with him, for I really remained on very good terms with my host and hostess, and dined with them again in the following year, when I was carefully given the first place.

A certain enormously rich couple, who had a huge house not far from Park Lane, by perpetual effort and by the spending of great sums of money, had managed to worm their way to the top of the London world. And finally their ambition was crowned by the intimation that a Royal Duke and Duchess would graciously condescend to honour them at dinner on a certain evening in June. (They had the first chef in Europe.) The dinner was to be a large one. Some forty guests were invited and were all to sit at one huge round table, decorated with orchids, in the dining room with golden walls and a flooring of jade green marble. Now this is precisely what happened:

Among the guests was a foreign Duchess, who had just arrived in London. She was young, a great beauty, as a girl had had one of the greatest names on the

Continent, and was married to the premier Duke of the country from which she came. Her rank, and the fact that she was a foreigner, made it obligatory that she should pass into the dining room with her partner immediately after her host and hostess and the Royal Duke and Duchess. She arrived, was greeted, and naturally expected to be told whom she was going into dinner with. But nothing was said about this. She saw ambassadors, noblemen, statesmen being told whom they were to take in, and being presented with name cards. But no one was brought to her. Nor was any card with her name on it given to any of the gentlemen present. When everybody was assembled the usual circle was formed, in which she took her place, and a moment afterwards the Royalties made their entrance and graciously walked round the circle, shaking hands with the bowing and curtseying company. Immediately afterwards the procession to the dining-room was formed. But what was the foreign Duchess's amazement when still no man was brought to her! And this amazement changed to something like horror when she actually beheld the whole company, two by two, male with female, as in the days of Noah, and headed by her host with the Royal Duchess, move with dignity out of the drawing-room slowly, and disappear, leaving her entirely alone.

She told me—for I had it from herself—that she stood for a moment almost petrified, wondering what she had better do. Her first impulse was at once to get up and leave the house. But then—this showed, I think, great delicacy of mind—she thought that if she did this her host and hostess, who would surely find out their mistake in a moment, would suppose she was mortally offended and had gone away in a huff. She therefore

decided that the best thing to do would be to follow alone to the dining room, and slip in as unostentatiously as possible, to the place that must be left vacant for her. She therefore went out of the drawing-room. But imagine her feelings when, on entering the magnificent dining room, where all the guests were seated and already devouring their soup, she could see no vacant place at the great round table, which was surrounded by a sort of hedge of powdered six-footers in charge of an immense butler and groom of the chambers.

"What on earth did you do?" I asked her suddenly.

"Stood among the footmen!" she replied.

"And then—?"

"Well, at first sight I thought of helping with the fish," she said—she had a Latin sense of humour—"but before I could get hold of a salmon His Royal Highness saw me. I shall never forget his expression. Of course he is a very old friend of mine and of my family. He turned at once and spoke to his hostess. Poor wretch! She became a sort of pale green—you know, like very old ivory sometimes gets. What happened then? Well, there was no place laid for me! But they got me in somehow. They wedged me in, and eventually I was given some food."

"But what was the explanation?"

"I never knew. They sent me a card of invitation. They expected me. They greeted me. But somehow they'd made no arrangements for me. They hadn't even got a man for me. Poor things! I heard afterwards that they had a terrible blowing up from H.R.H., who called on me at Claridge's the next day to express his disgust and indignation at their lapse. I begged him not to bother about it. But he never went near them again, and I heard that they really never got on afterwards."

Lady de Grey, afterwards Lady Ripon, used to give once a year at her lovely house at Coombe a large dinner party to which the principal stars of Covent Garden were invited as personal friends, and it was considered a great privilege to be included in her list of guests. She used to plan it all very carefully and ask people two months ahead, so as to be sure of getting exactly whom she wanted, and the evening always ended with delightful music, as all the singers relaxed in her tactful presence and enjoyed "showing off," like children.

I think it was in the season of 1908 that she invited me to one of her famous dinners, and I motored down to Coombe with Madame von Andre and my dear Leonie Leslie. It was a delightful gathering, for Lady de Grey somehow managed to invite wives without their husbands and husbands without their wives, picking out the better of the two in each couple. I often wonder how she managed it without making mortal enemies!

Among the guests that night were Melba, Scotti, MacCormick, Lady Mar and Kellie, Miss Muriel Wilson, Mrs. Asquith, Lady Constance Richardson, Prince Arthur of Connaught, Prince Francis of Teck, Marquis de Soveral, Reggie Lister and many others. Caruso was to have been of the party, but was involved in a law suit which obliged him to go to Italy.

Melba took a lot of persuasion before she consented to sing. The men had to go down on their knees before her and then drag her protesting to the piano, where a great amount of fuss went on until the music was produced, the song chosen, and Lady de Grey able to sit down again with a sigh of relief. I was told that the same

little scene occurred every year, but when the singing finally came one was rewarded.

After all this some one suggested that Lady Constance Richardson should dance a cake walk—this being a *chic* novelty—and requiring no persuasion at all she sprang on to the little stage at the end of the drawing-room, kicked off her slippers, and picked up her skirts. She had the most lovely figure and the flattest back I have ever seen. I remember noticing with awe that now and then she showed her legs *almost* to her knees! All the spectators were simply enraptured with her performance which then seemed to be the quintessence of all that was modern, and she was the success of the evening, putting the noses of all the professionals quite out of joint! I noticed that one of them got very restive and suddenly offered to play the piano for Lady Constance, which was quite unnecessary as the accompanist was already vamping away as hard as he could; but nobody heard her. She ended by singing the tune of the cake walk at the top of her voice, but even then was not able to distract any one's attention away from the dancer.

Lady Constance was one of the first to take up bare-legged dancing, and what is now an everyday occurrence seemed then a startling innovation. People used to whisper to each other with horrified round eyes, huddling in corners: "My dear, her legs were *pipe clayed,* and all her toe nails varnished bright pink!"

Maud Allen was of course the queen of that school, and I always considered her a great artist, head and shoulders above every one else. I remember Maudie Ashley writing to me when I was in Rome: "I have seen this new dancer, Maud Allen, at the Palace. I

examined her most carefully through my opera glasses and—she *does not wear tights!"*

It seemed incredible!

When I saw Maud Allen myself for the first time I was at a party given in London by Mrs. Potter Palmer, of Chicago, in honor of the Khedive of Egypt. It was a hot evening in July, and the season had reached its high-water mark. Night after night we had all been bidden to banquets and had partaken of all the most expensive foods in the world, served in the most luxurious ways possible. We had danced to the best orchestras on the finest floors, and we were so tired of it all we didn't know what to do. Leonie Leslie said to me: "If they offer me one more ortolan and one more pêche Melba, I shall scream!" So after another banquet, more luxurious and more expensive, also hotter and longer than any other, we took our places in the ballroom where a stage had been erected and where this new dancer was to try to arouse our jaded interest. I sat near the Khedive with whom conversation was never very easy. I had lunched with him in Egypt when I had been there with Sir Ernest Cassel, and so I recalled to him the beauty of a certain hedge of orange trees in his garden; its thick green foliage, neatly clipped and dotted with shining golden fruit, had remained in my memory. The only other thing I also remembered was a certain drawing-room entirely upholstered in bright emerald satin, but that I did not refer to.

And then we heard the first notes of Mendelssohn's Spring Song and Maud Allen appeared. She was wearing a soft little tunic that left her arms and legs bare, and a few vine leaves were twisted round her head.

She danced as the nymphs dance in the forest because it is springtime, the world is beautiful, and it is a joy to dance and be alive. The hot room, the Khedive, Mrs. Potter Palmer, and everything else seemed to melt away. I was in the forest with a nymph, I smelt the crushed grass and thought I heard a blackbird. The illusion only lasted a few minutes, but it was wonderful to have felt it.

Afterwards Maud Allen interpreted Chopin's Funeral March, swathed in gray draperies that concealed her features, and all the pain and loneliness in the world seemed concentrated in her little figure. I know I had to wipe my eyes.

She has had many imitators now, but I shall always remember with gratitude how she brought a breath of fresh air into that crowded London drawing-room.

A lovely party was the one given at Apsley House by the Duke and Duchess of Wellington in honor of King Edward and Queen Alexandra. In those days Apsley House was the only big house in London without electric light, and I am not sure that it is not so still. The effect of the countless candles illuminating the drawing-rooms was very beautiful, and the mellow light proved particularly becoming to women. The ball was preceded by a huge dinner, and I sat between the Duke of Wellington and Prince Francis of Teck. Minor royalties were as numerous as rabbits on a Norfolk Common! Of course I danced all night as was my frivolous custom in those days, and when I went into supper with Lord Shrewsbury, King Edward called to me and made me sit near him. He always took whiskey and soda at supper, and insisted that it was the most healthy

drink in the world. He wished me to adopt it also, so he poured some whiskey into my glass of nice Perrier water. I only took one sip and found it very nasty, but I was able to pass it secretly to my partner who disposed of it, and never again have I tasted whiskey.

One of the prettiest weddings I have seen was that of Princess "Daisy" of Connaught, when she was married at Windsor Castle in 1905 to the Crown Prince of Sweden. I was not one of the King's guests, who only numbered about fifty and had places in the Chapel; but the Duchess of Connaught sent me a ticket to view the procession and I went with my friend, Mrs. Crawshay, and Allison V. Armour to view the sight.

It was a lovely summer morning and the old town of Windsor was profusely decorated with wreaths of daisies, the effect of which was pretty and touching, with the gray Castle towering up in the background. As is usual in royal processions in England the King led his Queen by the hand from the Castle to the Chapel, and she looked wonderful with her great jewels and flowing train. The women guests all wore tiaras and evening dress and had already taken their places in the Chapel. Then the band played Lohengrin's Wedding March, and the Duke of Connaught appeared leading his daughter by the hand too. She looked like the Ice Princess under her heavy lace veil, so fair and so pale and so northern.

There was a great gathering of other royalties; in fact I think that very few of the guests were not of the family.

My compatriot, Lina Cavalieri, sang for one season at Covent Garden, and her extraordinary beauty attracted

more attention than her voice. London society, always eager for a new lion, took her up for a little, and I heard of her lunching at Mrs. Arthur Paget's, singing at a small party at Lady Dickson-Poynder's (now Lady Islington), being introduced afterwards to the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, and dancing at the Duchess of Rutland's ball. She looked like an empress and behaved with enormous dignity.

The rumor went round London that I had refused to meet her, but as a matter of fact we were never asked out together so I did not have an occasion to do so. All the same the American papers took up the story and I was sent cuttings with big headlines: "Roman Princess refuses to meet Roman singer!" and both our pictures; also a caricature of myself with a coronet on my head hurrying away from a little figure holding a sheet of music!

How many hospitable houses I remember visiting in London during all those seasons until the Great War put an end for several years to my visits to England! Mrs. Ronald Greville I stayed with very often, both at Polesden Lacey and in her beautiful home in Charles Street where, owing to her kindness in not wanting me to go to a nursing home, I even had an operation and was six weeks in bed, enjoying myself enormously!

The Duke and Duchess of Rutland also welcomed me affectionately whenever I arrived, and many gay luncheons and dinners have I had in the lovely old house in Arlington Street, so unique in London with its quaint courtyard and porter's lodge. Their entertainments were always amusing and artistic. I remem-

ber when the three daughters were unmarried, a charming trio: Marjorie, now Lady Anglesey, who looked exactly like the little ladies illustrated in *L'Art et la Mode;* Letty, now Lady Violet Benson, such good company and enormously popular with all the boys and girls; and then Diana, lovely as a child and still lovelier and more attractive now that she has achieved fame as Lady Diana Duff Cooper.

The Duke was a dear, always most cheery and affectionate, and we often went out together for a ramble. We once went to see a socialistic meeting in Hyde Park, which ended in some excitement and a scramble, and we raced together hand in hand over the grass, thoroughly enjoying the fun.

The Asquiths were friends I always lunched with once or twice during my stays in London, either at Downing Street, when Mr. Asquith was in office, or in their own home. I was very fond of Mr. Asquith—somehow I can never think of him as Lord Oxford!—and liked his quiet deliberate way of speaking and his sense of humor. He was always the same and always agreeable. I remember his telling me how he had been attacked by some rabid suffragettes at a public function a few days before when they had seized him by his coat and tried to strike him. He remained quiet and impassive throughout the scene, with his hands in his pockets. "For," said he, "I was admirably defended by the women of my family: Margot, with her diminutive fists, did very good work." His other defender was his daughter Violet, and between these two women the enemy was routed.

Lord Balfour I often met, too, and found him invari-

ably courteous and full of charm. Sir Henry Campbell Bannerman I once challenged to a game of clock golf at Coombe, which we had great fun over, and I finally beat him in a most triumphant way.

Lord Haldane was more pompous, and he rather frightened me. For Winston Churchill I have always had a weakness, owing to my great affection for his mother, and we have always been very friendly. I used to meet Lord Kitchener occasionally at parties. He was a striking figure that one could not overlook: very tall and broad shouldered, with a dark mustache and curiously light-colored eyes. His good looks were marred by a very bad squint. He never smiled and had not a particularly attractive manner, even when he was trying to be nice. One day we met at a luncheon party at Lady Naylor Leyland's, in Piccadilly, and he suggested taking me afterwards to see some very interesting Chinese porcelain that was for sale in Bond Street, and then to Carrington's, the Court Jeweler, who would show us the crown jewels that were being cleaned up for the coronation. I accepted with pleasure, and when the time came we left the house together. He said, "We will walk," and I obediently tripped along, trying to keep up with his long strides on the baking Piccadilly pavement and looking rather wistfully at all the passing taxis. In Bond Street we saw a wonderful pair of Chinese figures and Lord Kitchener, who was a connoisseur, looked at them longingly and discussed their points at length with the dealer, but their price was far beyond anything he could afford, and I wonder who eventually became their possessor.

When we left the Bond Street Gallery, Lord Kitchener

again said firmly, "We will walk," and off we went to Carrington's through the blazing July sunshine. It was interesting to be able to examine at close quarters the Koh-i-noor and the Sceptre and other historic objects that are not approachable in everyday life, and after that we emerged once more into the London streets. My cavalier then said: "I must be off now. . . I'm busy. Good-bye," and in a second he had vanished in the crowd and I picked my way along as best I could until I found a taxi.

Sem, the famous French caricaturist, had an excellent exhibition that year in Bond Street, and I went to it two or three times as it was most amusing to note how he had treated all my friends and acquaintances. He had drawn and painted little figures of well-known men, and these were cut out and pasted on thin wood and mounted on little stands so that they stood up by themselves; they were then grouped about a tiny stage, representing the paddock at a race meeting. The likenesses were very striking though somewhat cruel, especially of Sir Ernest Cassel, the Aga Khan, Lord Lonsdale, and Lord Farquhar. Luckily human vanity is so strong that all the victims said complacently: "Seen that fellow Sem's show? . . . Very good of everyone except me. But he couldn't catch *my* likeness at all. 'Pon my word, if it hadn't been for my hat I wouldn't have known who it was meant for!"

Lady Charles Beresford also had a country house at Coombe, and entertained delightfully there. E. F. Benson has described her and her milieu so perfectly in the

memoir of his mother, that nothing more remains to be said on the subject. His picture of her extraordinary appearance, her barbaric jewelry and unique draperies, her Pekinese dogs and her breezy conversation is quite perfect. I remember going to her house several times. Lord Charles Beresford sometimes attended his wife's parties and added to their gayety by his rollicking good spirits. He used to refer humorously to his wife in such terms as: "And here comes my little craft with a fresh coat of paint!" which she did not seem to resent in the least. I once met there Granier and Simone Le Bargy, both excessively talkative and artificial, so unlike my dear Duse! I found them far more attractive on the stage than off it. Simone Le Bargy divorced her husband soon afterwards, and now only calls herself Madame Simone. As for Le Bargy, a very fine actor, I made his acquaintance in the summer of 1912 at St. Moritz and found him very agreeable. I remember he was one of the spectators at an absurd entertainment we got up there, and after it was over he came up to me still breathless and wiping his eyes.

"Je n'ai plus de larmes, j'ai trop ri!" he exclaimed, and then he added something which has always remained in my memory: "Ce que j'admire dans les amateurs c'est leur audace. Ils ne savent pas ce que c'est que le trac. . . Mon Dieu, si je pouvais avoir ce toupet là, moi qui meurs toujours de peur avant d'entrer en scène!"

Twenty-odd years ago the impression of a London ballroom was not as smart as nowadays, when I think the average woman is much better dressed, but the beauties stood out in consequence far more conspicuously,

and when a woman was really handsome she became, with her long train and elaborate coiffure and tiara, a picture striking enough to be remembered.

The Duchess of Sutherland, now Lady Millicent Hawes, was one of those who looked best on big occasions, also the Duchess (Sheila) of Westminster. The latter's sister, Princess Pless, who came over every year from Germany, was even more lovely. I remember a ball at Grosvenor House where the two sisters outshone every one else. Princess Pless wore gold tissue that matched her hair, and a turquoise and diamond tiara the same color as her eyes, also a German order with a pale blue ribbon. She looked like a Princess in a fairy tale.

At that same ball Mrs. Cornwallis West, Princess Pless's mother, broke the string of her pearl necklace and the band was stopped while every one groveled under the chairs and sofas to collect the precious beads. It was then discovered that several of them were false, and what would now be considered very natural was then whispered about in corners as though it was an awful scandal!

Mrs. Cornwallis West had also been a great beauty in her day but that, of course, was long before my time. She belonged to a group of famous beauties that included Georgina Lady Dudley, Mrs. Langtry, the Duchess of Leinster, and several others.

Muriel Wilson was one of the beauties of my day, though she had already been out several years.

Mrs. Rupert Beckett was a very pretty woman and always very well dressed in the French fashion, which at that time was very distinct from the English. The

Duchess of Rutland, then Lady Granby, was the acknowledged leader of the English style of dress, which was characterized by flowing draperies and faded colors. Lady Windsor and Lady Tree also dressed in the same way. I suppose the English hats of that period would look "teed up" now, but they sat much more flatly on the head than the French hats which really were the most marvelous structures. I must confess with shame that it took me at least ten minutes to put on my hat in the old days. Hats were monuments of tulle or lace, trimmed with bouquets of plumes or else regular herbaceous borders, and the Real Article from Paris possessed a "bandeau," made of wire and velvet and the higher the better. It was sewn inside the rim and raised the hat several inches above one's head. The hat was fastened to one's chignon with very long pins, and a lot of excruciating prodding went on before it was firm enough to face the mildest breeze. Then one's front and side hair had to be pinned up with "invisible" hair pins to hide the bandeau, and if Nature had not supplied one with the necessary quantity and quality, whole bunches of curls had to be added. After that the veil had to be fastened: very carefully in order not to pull the tip of one's nose out of shape or to rub on one's eyelashes, and it was pinned to the sides of the head with two hairpins.

I will not enlarge on the tiny waist that was a painful necessity; the high collars that required several whalebones to support them and which made little wounds all round one's neck that were considered everyday occurrences; the long skirts that had to be gathered up gracefully at practically every step! The result of it all was an enormous difference in appearance between the well-

groomed woman who took great care over her toilet and who was assisted by a good maid, and the one who threw on her clothes just anyhow, without bothering.

On looking back I think everything is far more comfortable now than twenty years ago, and the only real advantage we had then was that we could travel all over the world without a passport.

I suppose the greatest change people of my generation have seen is the one brought about by the invention of automobiles. I can remember the time when I had never heard of them, and the noise of a great city was limited to the clip-clap of horses' hoofs and the whirr of carriage wheels. The first motor car I saw was a peculiar little affair, rather like a high perambulator, which was introduced in Rome by Don Marino Torlonia about 1894. He drove it himself, and it constantly broke down and had to be towed home amidst volleys of derisive jeers from the Roman cabmen.

A year later I had my first ride in another car of the same sort that belonged to Principe Borghese. He took my Colonna cousins and myself, who were all children, for a little turn in the Borghese Villa at Nettuno, where we were staying. We were frightfully excited and thought the speed was wonderful, though we all had to get out and run behind at the uphills!

The next cars that came to Rome were little de Dion-Boutons which would look very funny now. They were 5 H.P., open, of course, with two stiff little seats facing each other and no wind screen, hood or protection of any kind. To reach the machinery one had to get out and lift up the back seat and grope in mysterious depths beneath it. My uncle Prospero Colonna was one of the

first to possess a little de Dion-Bouton, and he took me in it to the picnic at Ninfa where I met my future husband for the first time. I don't know if the word "chauffeur" had already been adopted, but Uncle Prospero was assisted by a very small boy whom he affectionately nicknamed "Cipolletta," literally, "Little Onion!" Cipolletta wore a cap and was very proud of his duties.

On the way to Ninfa the de Dion-Bouton suddenly stopped, which was a habit they all had, and we were obliged to get down and lift up the seat to see what was the matter. Little Onion—who knew more about the works than we did, which was not saying much—put his head knowingly inside, but as a gale was raging at the time the seat was blown back and nearly decapitated him. He was extricated by my uncle, purple in the face and roaring with pain and fright. Uncle Prospero, who had a heart of gold and whose own boys were about the same age as the poor little chap, gathered him up in his arms and sat on a heap of stones by the roadside, rocking him to and fro, patting his back and soothing him in the most fatherly of ways. When Little Onion's howls had subsided we discovered that though his poor little face was all swollen and discolored he was not seriously hurt, but the de Dion-Bouton still refused to budge. It was ages before it condescended to start again, and we got to Ninfa long after the rest of the party.

In those times *pannes* were daily occurrences if one were rash enough to trust oneself to a motor car. When I married, my father-in-law possessed two or three of these awful little de Dion-Boutons, and they were only used for going to and from Cisterna to Rome. They were so unreliable that it was the usual thing after a certain hour

to send the coachman out with the brake and a pair of horses along the Appian Way, to find the car and tow it home.

A few years later the Duke got a larger car, a Léon Bollée, which caused great excitement in the family. It turned out very like the butler Girolamo who always said and did the wrong thing, and it gave endless trouble. My brothers-in-law named it Maria Angelona, and her contrariness and her vicissitudes were a gold mine of family jokes.

In London I remember that about 1904 all the smart people went in for electric broughams. The *carrosserie* was always very high perched, while the chauffeur and footman, who still had his place on the box, sat very low, and it was a most delightful innovation, for one had all the fun of seeing what was going on in front of one in the street. One used to skid terribly in those early days: it was quite usual to turn broadside on and be stopped with a bump by the pavement. Happily the pace was different in those times!

I remember a motor trip I took from London with Guglielmo Marconi in 1904, that we still laugh about whenever we meet. He was one of the early pioneers of motoring, and had what was then the latest *cri* in automobiles: a Napier 24 H.P., in which he used to career about all over England.

On that occasion he took my sister-in-law, Baronne Grenier, Sir Frederic and Lady Bathurst, and me for a day in the country. I sat in front with him while he drove, and he had no chauffeur. He wished to show me what a car could do, and we timed ourselves on a straight bit of road, a mile in thirty-five seconds, he said, which

Lallie Charles

Vittoria Colonna, Duchess of Sermoneta, in 1908

seemed to me quite incredible. The part of the story which is more difficult to believe is that we had the road all to ourselves on a Sunday morning just out of London.

We lunched gayly at Egham, and then on the homeward journey our troubles began. We burst a tire somewhere near Aldershot, and Marconi actually did not have a spare one. We left Lady Bathurst and my sister-in-law sitting sadly in the motor car and Marconi, Sir Frederic, and I walked to Aldershot to see what could be done. It was Sunday and we found a deserted town with all the shops shut and a fine rain beginning to fall. In those days garages did not exist; one had to find a shop that stocked rubber tires. Somehow we managed to get one opened, but the tires the man had were much too small. Anything as gigantic as a 24 H.P. Napier was not usual! He gave us the home address of a man who had another shop and said we had better look him up. After a weary search we found the gentleman at tea with his family, and it required all our powers of persuasion—and he was stone deaf—to lure him away and see what he could do for us. So we all trailed along to his shop, only to find again the same difficulty: he possessed no tires of the size required. But at least he was resourceful, for he suggested cutting up an old one and making a patch. Sir Frederic meanwhile went to look for a cab to convey us back to the stricken motor car, and as the shop owner wanted to go and find his assistant and apparently did not trust us implicitly, he locked Marconi and me in the shop while he was away, which was quite a considerable time.

When the tire was finally patched and put on again, the other two poor women found (they had taken refuge

in a cottage thinking we were lost forever!), and the motor re-started, all the afternoon had gone. I wanted to wire to my grandmother to reassure her, but, of course, all the telegraph offices were shut, and, as I said to Marconi, what was the use of going out with the man who had invented wireless telegraphy? We crawled back to London on our groggy tire, and just as we got near Earl's Court it burst again! This time I abandoned Marconi, found a hansom and drove back to Eaton Square, where I arrived at past ten o'clock, after an eleven hours' trip! Such were our pleasures in the early days of motoring!

Owing to a ridiculous misunderstanding my husband gathered from my letters that this long day of mishaps had been spent with Caruso, and wrote me very reprovingly on the subject. I told the story to dear Soveral, the "Blue Monkey" as every one called him, for he always loved a joke, and whenever he saw me after that he always asked me if I had been "carousing" lately.

Motors improved by leaps and bounds, and in the following year, 1905, I met Mr. James Breese in Paris in June and he proposed taking me to Calais in his automobile next day, as we were both going over to London. I accepted, and he came to fetch me at my hotel in a 40 H.P. Mercedes, which was about the most powerful car any one had in those days. I sat near him, and poor Sizy occupied the back seat, very miserable, clutching her hat with one hand and my jewel case with the other, and bouncing up and down at every bump. I was no happier myself, as the force of the wind nearly broke my neck and I was terribly cold, being insufficiently wrapped up. I suppose there was no wind screen in those days, or else

they did not afford the same protection that they do now. We did the 275 kilometers in five hours and three quarters, which seemed too astonishing for words, and I wrote down in a notebook, so as to remember it forever, that at one moment we had actually reached a speed of sixty-five miles an hour!

I remember that a relation of my grandmother's, Colonel A. Fortescue, met me at Victoria Station, and shook his head very disapprovingly when he heard of the first part of my journey. He said it was all very well for the Continent, but those dreadful machines were going to be warned off the road in England, and would soon cease to exist.

CHAPTER VII

TWO LITERARY FRIENDS

ONE of the best friends I ever had was the American writer, Marion Crawford, who had made his home in the south of Italy and who loved and understood the country better than any one I ever met.

When first I met him he was already middle aged, tall and splendidly built, with a powerful physique. At heart he was a sailor, and nothing attracted him more than cruising in his own yacht, the *Alda,* along the coasts of the Italy he loved so well.

Our first meeting was in Rome when I was eighteen. His sister, Mrs. Winthrop Chanler, who was already my friend in those days, arranged to take me to the beautiful Villa Albani, and Crawford came to meet me there, his romantic nature and love of Roman history prompting him to make the acquaintance of a girl called Vittoria Colonna. I still remember the charm of that May afternoon, wandering in the shady avenues of the old Villa among gray statues and splashing fountains, and listening to the fascinating conversation of a type of man I had never met before in my short and sheltered life. A friendship sprang up between us that afternoon which lasted until his death, and only a short time before his end he wrote to me:

Shall we spend your birthday in routing out some queer corner? You are not past birthdays yet, though it must

be ten years since I met a wild looking thing with wonderful eyes and blue black hair all over the place and a dark red frock put on the Lord knows how! It was in the Villa Albani.

One always thinks of Marion Crawford as a novelist, because he first achieved fame in that direction. His first novel of Roman life, *Saracinesca,* had an enormous vogue when I was still a child, and I always heard that my Aunt, Duchessa Sforza, née Vittoria Colonna, had been his model for the heroine, Corona. I remember questioning him on the subject years afterwards, and his rather curious answer: "I only knew Duchessa Sforza by sight. *You* are my exact idea of Corona, physically and morally, only you were born after I finished the novel."

When I knew him he was far more interested in writing his *History of Rome in the Middle Ages* than in producing works of fiction. In fact, he referred to the latter contemptuously as his "pot boilers," never wished me to read them, and though he continued to turn them out regularly year by year, he told me he did not even bother to correct the proofs.

The theater interested him more, but his real passion was his great work on Rome. He was working in collaboration with Professor Giuseppe Tomasetti, the archivist of Palazzo Colonna, and he would absorb Tomasetti's knowledge of history and reproduce it in his own flowing, pleasant English. Having a powerful brain, he retained all the facts acquired, and this made him the most agreeable companion during the long rambling afternoons we often spent together, exploring out-of-the-way corners of Rome.

We must have talked on his favorite subject at that first meeting, for among my papers I find this little note in an envelope still addressed to Donna Vittoria Colonna, Palazzo Colonna, and dated May 25, 1900:

Dear Donna Vittoria,

I left Rome on the day after we met at Villa Albani, and my sister has kindly forwarded your note and the beautiful photograph for which I am most sincerely obliged. . . .

You spoke of some letters of the Admiral, Marcantonio, referring to the Battle of Lepanto, and you seemed to think it possible that there may be in your archives something from the hand of Don John of Austria. I wonder if your Father would allow a copy of these letters, or even one of them, to appear in my short history of Southern Italy and Sicily. Unfortunately I have not the advantage of knowing your Father. Is it too much to beg you to ask for me?

I think I was able to procure him what he wanted, for I find another little note, of grateful thanks.

Soon afterwards I married and left Palazzo Colonna for Palazzo Caetani, but we continued to meet whenever he came to Rome and for ten years he wrote to me very regularly, often at few days' intervals. I have a large mass of his letters, all written in the smallest, neatest handwriting in the world.

He had a horror of meeting "people"—he gave the word an intonation of supreme contempt—and much preferred carrying me off for an afternoon's sight-seeing, roaming about in a little open cab or *botte* as they are still called in Rome. Motor cars he always detested and called "sudden death carts."

The following note is one of many similar ones I received during the course of our friendship.

Tuesday, A.M.

DEAR PRINCESS,

If you would really like to go and potter over some ruins or churches with me, will you let me know whether I may come for you? The reason why I suggest a *botte* is that my cabby knows every stone and every "custode" from going about with me, and does not mind bad roads. If you will go with me I will have a big rug and a cushion for you and a foot warmer if you like! Only say the word, and tell me if there is any place you especially care to see. Do you know S. Sabina and all that region well? There are wonderful things there. . . . Almost *any* afternoon, from half past two—at your *portone,* if you will excuse me from mounting the stairs. Do come! . . .

Marion Crawford often had to go over to the United States on business connected with his literary work, and though he admired and was proud of his country, I think he always felt more of a stranger there than in Italy.

On December 8, 1902, he wrote me from 66 Fifth Avenue, New York:

MY DEAR DONNA VITTORIA,

. . . This is a queer country. I wish you could come here some winter and let me show you something of it. There are many houses twenty stories high and sometimes within a hundred yards you may still see a little cottage, built of wood, at least a hundred years old.

Only you may *not* see it, because if you stop to look at anything you will be run over. . . .

I had a letter that pleased me to-day. The "Rappresentanza Comunale" of Bagni di Lucca—where I was born—is going to name a street after me!! But *you* have got one named after you in Rome. I am the "country mouse," evidently. I have your cards with me and shall do all I can to get you some interesting autographs. The President is in trouble with his leg and is very busy, but I shall ask him the favour in a few days, and when I go to see Mr. Morgan I shall take one of your cards in my pocket. Do you care for Melba? She is an old friend of mine, and is coming soon. I will get something from her in any case and you can put it into your book or not, as you please. Some day, in Rome, I shall ask for *your* autograph with a word for myself. I have an edition of the "Diva Marchesa's" poems, published during her lifetime, and it would add to its value for me if you would write in it. Will you?

Duse is acting here in d'Annunzio's plays and as a matter of duty I am going to them all, "Gioconda," "Citta Morta" and "Francesca." The *literature* of them is beautiful but they are not dramatic and it is only Duse's popularity that keeps the audience tolerably quiet through the performance. . . . A propos of "Francesca," I sent you a copy of mine, in English, to Rome not long ago. It is one of only twelve copies that were printed, and the type was broken up, so it is a curiosity. Perhaps you will like the English less than the French, for in writing the play for Sarah Bernhardt I was conscious that I was thinking in French half the time. The play is now being translated into Spanish and will probably be given in Madrid this winter.

About this time Marion Crawford made the acquaintance of Miss Gladys Deacon, now Duchess of Marlborough, and like many others he fell under the spell of her remarkable beauty and intelligence. While sailing round Corsica on the *Alda* in September, 1902, he wrote to me:

Have you met Miss Deacon, about whom there is so much talk just now? I should like very much to know what sort of impression she made on you. I saw her frequently in Rome and again in Paris, but though we talked much, and she talks well, I never got anywhere near to understanding her. My friend and I agree that she would make a marvellous Beatrice, but what character may really be under that strange *archaic* type of beauty, goodness only knows. I like to think that the one may suit the other. She is like the Archaic Minerva in the Naples Museum.

And again:

So you have seen Miss Deacon, and you think her beauty weird. It has certainly suggested a queer novel to me, but I make haste to say that my heroine only resembles Miss Deacon in looks. . . . Yes, she inherits what one might call "natural publicity," she cannot help attracting attention, and people will always talk about her. . . . I have seen a good deal of her. . . . She is clever, and has read a great mass of stuff without quite understanding it, but always *meaning* to understand and to judge fairly of the value of things and people. It is rather unusual to find anyone who always wishes to be fair. . . .

And later on, evidently more and more under her spell, he wrote from New York:

Jan. 8th, 1903

. . . Miss Deacon's Mother, now called Mrs. Baldwin, is here for a few days, and she says that her daughter is going to Rome with Donna Giovanella to stop a while at the palazzo. You will have a chance of seeing Miss Deacon often and talking with her, and I shall be very curious to know what you think of her. She interests me very much, her gifts of mind seem to me extraordinary, and I cannot help believing that she has a generous and enthusiastic nature. . . . I trust your judgment of her brains and you are one of the few who have no cause to envy her looks. (That sounds as if I meant that even *you* would envy her beauty if you were hideous! I really do not mean that—perish the thought! But you see, one cannot help thinking that real beauty is above even the suspicion of envy, just as real genius is. . . .) I have just finished a modern English play, which is to be brought out next autumn in London by Martin Harvey and Miss Fay Davis. I wonder if you have ever seen either of them act. They are the best of the young—the *really* young actors. I spent most of yesterday afternoon with Fay Davis. She has great charm, is as fresh as a spring morning and perfectly unaffected. If you knew what most actresses are in private life! Cabotin, cabotine, . . . we lack the word in English. It means a human animal that lives on admiration and dies when it cannot show itself to an audience. . . . I cannot say that actresses are often good company, except Sarah Bernhardt, who is certainly the most wonderful woman alive. As a rule they think of nothing but themselves, and as soon as one speaks of anything else, if it were as interesting as the last judgment, or a universal war, their faces become perfectly blank and they really cease to hear what is said.

In 1905, he was back in Rome and hard at work again on his history of Rome. He wrote me from Via San Martino—

Dec. 15th, 1905

My dear Princess,

Following up our conversation of last night, I write to ask you whether you will very kindly transmit my request to your Father. The position is this: Prof. Tomasetti and I are working together at a History of Rome, and it would be a great advantage to me if the Prince would authorize him to let me occasionally come in the morning and use the table in the *library not in the archives*—for my work, as well as the printed books of reference on the shelves. I should certainly not interrupt the Professor's own work, but it would make a difference, and a great one, if I could be near him now and then, for I often lose time through lack of an indication which he could give me in one word. The use of the books would also be very valuable to me, as I of course cannot bring all I need to Rome for the winter. It would be understood that I should not touch anything in the *archives,* and Tomasetti would be responsible for me. Indeed, this all comes to this,—that he, Tomasetti, may be allowed to use his discretion in letting me come in. . . .

And a few days afterward:

Dear Donna Vittoria,

How kind you are! Bis dat qui cito dat. I stopped at the Archives this afternoon to see Tomasetti and he showed me your Father's most kind note, granting all you asked for me. Next Tuesday morning I shall go

and sit at a little table among the books and do some work in those heavenly surroundings.

Marion Crawford was much interested in my drawing and painting, and wished me to illustrate a book on Italy which he had a mind to write. But though we corresponded a good deal on the subject and he gave me a lot of practical advice on technical matters, such as effective reproduction, nothing ever came of it. It must have been my fault, for he urged me strongly in a whole series of letters.

A little later, in 1907, he persuaded me to try my hand at fiction, and a short story called "The Stormy Night" was the result of my first attempt. I was desperately ashamed of it, and no one but Marion ever knew of its existence. It was written in the greatest secrecy, which amused him very much.

Your little picture of yourself bundling your papers into a drawer and being found "humming unconcernedly at the window" delights me and will certainly put itself into a book or story some day. I wonder what your room is like, what colour the curtains are, and what you have on the walls! In some ways you are a rather mysterious young person, which is probably one reason why the Romans don't appreciate you as they ought. Nobody who does clever things in secret is ever popular. Perhaps, for popularity one should never do clever things at all. . . .

When "The Stormy Night" was finally completed I posted it to Marion Crawford who was then staying in his villa at Sorrento, near Naples. He answered:

Jan. 19th, 1907

I have just received your note and the MSS. and write a line to say so at once, as it will take a couple of days to examine the work carefully. No one shall see it, or know of it through me . . . I shall give you as plain and honest an opinion of your work as if you were one of those struggling young men who often consult me about writing. From what little I have read of yours I really believe you possess the rare gift of writing good English without affectation. That is one of the main elements of success itself. . . .

I suppose the mere fact of a fall in the hunting field does not count with you any more than the splitting of a sail or carrying away of a spar is a serious matter to me, but please avoid breaking your neck, which is not only ornamental in itself but carries a head with something in it, thereby differing from most necks! . . .

And then, on January 23, 1907, he sent me this criticism of my work which I give in full, for it is so thorough and so instructive, coming from a man who had made a handsome income by fiction writing since his youth, that it will interest all.

Villa Crawford
Sant Agnello di Sorrento

Dear Princess,

I have read "The Stormy Night" with pleasure to myself—if not with profit to you! In fact, I laughed heartily, all by myself, at the dinner scene in the asylum. The idea is good, and the story is far better written than the average Magazine tale. It is so well done that it makes me wish it were *much better* done—if you understand that sort of praise. Do you?

In the first place, your fear of being diffuse has made

you pull your horse. That is almost Irish, for false metaphors! You have the material for a much longer story, without thinning it at all. It begins abruptly, in the middle of things, but for the ordinary reader it supposes too much knowledge of what a balloon is and how it is managed. If I had not heard your own account of that trip from Paris, I should not have understood what they were doing. The public, for instance, knows nothing about "ripping-valves" etc. Then, too, it wishes to know *why* the party went up in such weather. A few paragraphs would explain that the storm came on after the ascent, otherwise the reader would certainly feel that you deserved to come down in a lunatic asylum.

But all that would pass. What I feel most is that you have not done all you could with the circumstances of the dinner and the night. Though I laughed over the climax I suspected a *little too soon* that I was in a mad house. The table and the guests need more detailed description, to make a more deceptive picture, and so to lead gradually to the old lady who thinks she is Empress of China. The *climax itself* is first rate . . . do not add a word to it, and do not expand afterwards, unless you choose to introduce a new incident—as, for instance, that *one* of the lunatics is not caught and has succeeded in hiding in Dot's room, or anything of that sort. It is all right as it is. After any climax "il resto lo canta l'organo" as the popolino says. What I should like would be more *preparation* for such a capital scene as the thunderstorm during dinner.

About the English. You write too steadily in short sentences, and so you sacrifice the strong effect they produce. Kipling is a master of variety in that, as in many things, for while seeming to tell his story without the least thought of effect, he really works upon the reader by the extraordinary *variety* of the effects he skil-

fully produces. Many of your sentences, especially in descriptions, could be improved by being joined, or punctuated with a semi-colon instead of a full stop. Yet there is otherwise little change in them, for your grammar is excellent, and your way of putting things is straightforward and often striking.

I am sure I have said enough, and probably more than you bargained for, or will like. Put it down to real interest in the story, please, for I have been writing to you just as I should to a struggling beginner in the profession instead of to your Magnificence!!

With best greetings

Very truly yours

M. C.

At the end of the year he had the idea of incorporating my story in one of his own, and asked me if I would like it. I was very much amused and sent the MSS. back to him again with my consent—feeling rather like the mouse assisting the lion.

The baby arrived safely by post yesterday [he wrote], and is kicking and crowing in its cradle, which is a nice wicker manuscript basket with a Chubb lock and a green leather top. It is a remarkably healthy baby and only needs to be put into the right surroundings to present a very fine appearance. In fact it only needs a little nourishment. It is to be called "The Undesirable Governess," whose mad father turns up in the lunatic asylum, making your invention the climax that brings everything all right.

And on November 21, 1907, he writes gleefully:

You have no idea how well your work fits into mine. I have done little to the story, up to the thunderstorm,

beyond adding another girl to the party and expanding the descriptions here and there, and that is where I am, near the end of what will make a small volume. . . .

But it was only some time after Marion Crawford's death that one day on picking up a magazine the title of a story caught my eye, and I sadly read our joint effort, "The Undesirable Governess," thinking how gayly we would have discussed it together if he could have been spared till then!

Always the most loyal of friends, he once flared up tremendously on account of a very mild criticism I made of one of his artistic friends. Criticism is too strong a word, for I had and still have the greatest admiration for the artist in question. As far as I can recollect, I was guilty of describing her in one of my letters as "rather a poseuse."

Ferneybank
Edzell
July 10th Scotland

. . . which reminds me of your meeting Melba at that dinner. I am very sorry you did, for if you had any illusion about the great artist you lost it, and you were moved to say a very cruel thing which was not like you. Why do people give "artistic dinners" and ask the Almanach de Gotha to dine with "Who's Who?" Calvé once said to me that "it takes three generations of peasants to make a voice," and she wound up by striking her knee with her solid fist and crying out at the top of her lungs: "Ah, moi, je suis paysanne, par exemple!" And once, in America I think, I was talking to Sarah

Bernhardt after luncheon when she took out a rouge box and puff and proceeded to dab herself with colour. I asked her why she did it, especially as she was looking very well that day. She laughed and answered: "Mon petit, c'est mon métier!" Whereupon the society people present were dreadfully shocked. But what else do you expect? And what can you *exact* from people brought up as you cannot imagine? *They* are professional singers, musicians, actresses, perhaps painters, literary men;—*you* are—well, a professional princess! It is their ideal of joy to be asked to meet you on a footing of equality with *them*. They do their best to imitate you for an hour, and the result is pitifully funny. I am a professional, too. It is not an effort for me to eat nicely, and keep my elbows off the table because I happen to have been born among people who had good manners—but that is mere chance, since much greater than I, like Dickens and Zola, were not. In thirty years of the literary profession, my fellow professionals in all the arts have become a part of my existence, a vast number have been acquaintances and one or two have been friends, though in a particular and limited sense. So you mustn't mind if I say a word for them—do you?

I have known M. close on sixteen years; I never knew her do a mean or unkind thing, and I have known of her doing a good many very generous ones, and some few things that took real courage and decision. One was when the lights went out in the theatre at San Francisco in the earthquake, and she stopped the panic, for she kept singing all the time.

And now I have done and you have already forgiven me for answering what you said—I am sure you have, because you are quite one of the nicest people living.

In 1908 his health, shaken by a rough life in malarial countries, began to fail, and though he made a jest of it I felt a vein of sadness running through his letters. His breathlessness prevented his going up any stairs, and even writing became a very great effort. He wrote:

Dec. 29, 1908 Sant Agnello di Sorrento

Do not be anxious about me, even for a little, please. I had fever for seven weeks and am as thin as Job's turkey, but I get about, more or less, and can now do a little work—terribly necessary, for I am urged by cables almost every day. I drive out on fine days, but my walking is rather an absurd performance, for I can never quite tell what my legs are going to do, they seem quite independent of each other and of me. When I have got something on my bones and the sun begins to shine I may try to get to Rome.

And a little later he writes again:

In appearance I look like the Camel just after he had passed through the Eye of the Needle. As a study of bones (I love your energy in going to the life school, and I envy it!) my outward man would perhaps find more favour in your eyes than at any previous moment of our acquaintance. *"Che bello scheletro!"* my doctor says every time he examines my carcase to see if there is any earthly reason why this fever should go on.

Buona festa for yesterday, which my little calendar kept telling me all day was Santa Vittoria. May every hope be fulfilled, every desire satisfied and every little pain be stilled, if there are any in your life, and may you have your heart's wish, now and always.

Sancta victoria, victoriae victria victoriem perpetuam concede.

His familiar envelopes, with the well-known tiny script, came more and more seldom, but he roused himself in his weakness to write me another of his long letters soon after the Messina earthquake. It is curious that in the last letter I was to receive from him he finally dropped the formal "dear Princess" from which he had never swerved for many years.

S. Agnello
Jan. 14, 1909

DEAR FRIEND,

I wonder whether you are bored when I answer your letter almost by return of post? Yours that came yesterday interested me profoundly, for I have followed all the details of the disaster from the beginning, and I knew you were at Messina with the hospital ship. It is a side of you that I have never seen, and the truth of what you feel is in every word you wrote me—strong, direct and simple as yourself. Our one mutual connection, my son-in-law Pietro, went down to Messina on Wednesday, the 30th—two days after the destruction—and spent two days and a half in the city, at the imminent risk of his life. Twice he was fired on by the soldiers for a burglar! When the façade of the Trinacria Hotel fell, he narrowly escaped—again he was almost trampled to death by a mob rushing for a steamer—in short, he had a rough time of it, but he is a cool hand and as strong as a mastiff and came back with no broken bones and full of information which I cabled in many letters to the American press. I am also going to write a *literary* account of the whole catastrophe, for a highly respectable Magazine! Pietro was in reality the only outsider who got into the city during the first days in search of information and who got it at first hand.

When you are quite settled and rested I want to put a question to you, about the book I am finishing and the play on the same subject which is to be brought out next month. It is a problem about which I myself am very doubtful. When you are ready—and *willing*—to consider it, please let me know.

With many good greetings

Affectionately yours

MARION CRAWFORD.

But I never knew what he wished to ask me, for after that his pen was silent. He died on April 9, 1909—a big-hearted man, with a big body and a big brain. Nothing small or petty could ever be connected with him, and I am always grateful to Providence for having sent such a good friend into my life.

From Marion Crawford my thoughts instinctively turn to Robert Hichens, for I have known him very nearly as long.

It is difficult for me to write about him freely, as I am glad to say he is still very much alive and very much my friend, though I see less of him now, unfortunately, than when he spent his winters in Rome and wrote *The Fruitful Vine*.

The year he wrote that well-known novel we had all developed a craze for roller skating, which entirely superseded dancing as an evening amusement. The Roman palaces with their marble floors were very suitable to this; in fact, in some houses we could pass from one drawing-room to another, all round the house, without encountering any obstacles or anything but a smooth surface all the way, and we used to go out to dinner taking our boots and skates in a bag. This amused Robert Hichens very

much, and he described one of our skating parties in *The Fruitful Vine.*

He was one of the small group of friends who attended the lectures given in my house by Duse's young poetess. Always a hard worker, he found that life in Rome took him away from his writing too much, as he was very popular in society, so he would retire to Taormina in Sicily and write me from there.

In the winter of 1906 he wrote:

. . . I am very sorry not to come back to Rome, but it's as you say. I find it very difficult to work there and I have a lot to do. Here it is lovely but humdrum. No dinners and lunches: bed at ten!! You must smile at the idea. I have some friends, including Brondë, so I am not quite dull, and I am a great deal out of doors in the mountains. Yes, that paragraph must have been meant for you, the description was too close to be doubted. The impertinence of reporters is amazing. I do not mind it when it is concentrated upon me, but I object very much to it when you are included.

Dear Hamilton Aidë! He is a marvel. At his age, if I ever reach it, I shall be bald, toothless, rickety and probably altogether insufferable. But he still paints pictures, writes plays and novels, and skips about the world like a three-year-old. Only Greppi can equal him! [Count Greppi eventually died in 1923, aged 104.] I read much of you and all you are doing. It sounds very brilliant and enticing, and must, I should think, be interesting. But I am glad you work, and care to work, and you have a genuine talent. I remember clearly many of your sketches. You would find some glorious subjects here. How I wish that some day you could run over and let me be your cicerone. Browning said Italy would

be found engraved upon his heart. I almost think Sicily will be on mine.

I owe Robert Hichens a debt of gratitude for the earnest and practical encouragement he gave me to write, though I must own it has taken me a good many years to follow his advice. He also, like my other literary friend, Marion Crawford, wished me to visit America, and in that respect, too, I have been an extremely long time in acting on his suggestion. In one of his letters, in 1912, he says:

I have been in America, having a "lovely time." How you would enjoy that country! At least I think so. But you would be nearly killed with kindness and hospitality.

I think one of the reasons why Robert Hichens and I have always been such good friends and understood each other so well is that he is an Englishman with a passion for southern countries, while I belong to the south and feel so strong a love for England. We often talked about this, and I find in one of his early letters he says to me:

. . . I am so interested in all you say about the call of your English blood. I thoroughly understand it. Oddly enough my call is towards the East and the extreme South—the lands of the sun. But from my Mother's side I get French, German, Swedish and Portuguese blood, as well as Irish and English. What a mixture!

When I was in London during the season of 1906 he was basking in the sun of Naples, and wrote:

. . . I see by the papers that you are having a good time in your beloved London and sometimes I wish I were there. . . . I am terribly out of it, and if I ever come to

town during a season again I must take lessons in deportment and conversation beforehand, or you will see despairing questions addressed to the "Etiquette Editor" of some newspaper connected with social doings. "Ought one to leave a card after being at a party?" "Is it the correct thing to eat an ice with a knife or would it be better manners to make use only of a spoon?" etc. I wonder if you enjoyed Ascot. It seems to have been a great success. I remember some years ago staying near Ascot for the week with a party and I returned to London utterly exhausted. I always think racing tremendously tiring. Perpetual talking in the open air, followed by tennis, dinner, pool—bridge I never play—with tennis again in the morning before the races in very hot weather made me quite thin. I even looked my age—a frightful tragedy when one gets to my time of life. As I expect to be abroad in the winter I have hopes of meeting you in Rome. Some great friends of mine, the De Navarros (Mary Anderson and her husband) are going to winter there, I think and have asked me to stay with them if they do. But anyhow I expect to come to that delightful City, which always draws one back to it. The heat here is great, but I am high up and have delightful rooms with balconies looking over the bay. I am rather like your husband,—"always immersed in ink and paper," and have made no long excursions as I have no time. But every night I go on the sea for some hours. Last night I was out till midnight. The moon was nearly full, and it was too exquisite. I have a passion for the sea, though I love the Desert even more.

When are we to make our excursion to the latter? You, I believe, would thoroughly enjoy it, for somehow, though I have always seen you in Society, I can imagine you perfectly happy for a time in the wilds. Many people I can only conceive of in drawing rooms. You know

the type. I could mention a good many now in London, but will charitably forbear.

How are the pictures getting on? I very much wish you could see, and paint, a most enchanting moated Grange and garden full of peacocks I know. It is Groombridge Place, a few miles from Tunbridge Wells, and belongs to some old friends of mine, two Miss Saints. If you find yourself in that neighborhood [Kent] do try and see it. You will be rewarded.

But when Robert Hichens went to London he enjoyed it with the best of us. We met there in the autumn of 1905 and I was the first to leave. He wrote to me from the Grosvenor Hotel in November:

. . . How delightful of you to write. No, London misses you very much and has been looking haggard ever since you left, and to-day is drowned in tears. So, you see, you ought to have stayed.

I have seen a good deal of Mrs. Leslie, and like her immensely. She is so natural and straightforward. I have been out every night since I came up and am going out every night till I leave. I hope to be in Rome about the 18th, and mean to be very quiet there as I must really write, and find it quite impossible to do much here, as there is never half an hour without interruptions. . . . I am simply longing to start, as the climate of London makes me feel like Job in his worst moments.

I have been communicating with the spirits since you left, and "sat" with Eric Barrington and his wife, Alec Yorke and Miss Wingfield. We had a message for the Tzar: "Tell Tzar to get out before 3rd December." I wanted to send His Majesty a wire: "Get out before December 3rd—Hichens—London," but Alec Yorke wouldn't let me! Perhaps he thought it would be im-

pertinent. Don't tell all this to Prince Teano, or he'll think me too silly to be ever allowed again beneath your roof. Shall we have a sitting in Rome and see what happens? . . .

In Rome I shall remain "hermetically sealed" during the day, as I have lots of work to get through. Unfortunately I possess a festive and frivolous side to my character, so I have to be very stern with myself.

I long to see the hats. I am sure they are really lovely. [I had been shopping in Paris.] How I wish you were running over here for February, but you will be in the midst of the gayeties of Rome. I met the Duke of Connaught the other day. . . . The funniest thing is "The Little Michus." I expect you saw it. It is quite delightful.

Baroness de Meyer has reappeared, with masses of new jewels, and Lady Charles Beresford turned up from I don't know where but has now gone to Venice. There is plenty of scandal as usual, but I am such a country cousin that I hardly understand most of it. I long to see again the "Street of the Dark Shops" which I always think of as Radiant with light from your hospitable windows.

Another time he wrote to me from Broadway, Worcestershire, when I was again in London:

I was delighted to get your interesting letter and to hear we shall be in London at the same time. Do let us go to something together if you feel inclined. I shall call and then I hope we can arrange something. This winter I fear I shall only have a few weeks in Rome. . . . I wish you could pay a flying visit to Biskra when we are there; that would be perfect. I go to Sicily, then from Trapani to Tunis, and so on to Biskra. It is not very difficult. But I remember that you have bought a hunter, and of course you won't leave Rome in the hunting

season. I return to Italy for the summer, as I am meditating a Neapolitan novel. I've finished the Sicilian one—thank Heaven.

You must have had a really good time over here, as I have read about you and your successes in various papers. In fact, I think you would be surprised how much I know about all you have done! England likes you so much that I think you must have a soft corner in your heart for it. I used to love London, but your Italy has quite spoilt me, and, to tell the truth, I am always longing to be back there. I shall never care for any country as I care for Italy, or like any people so much as the Italians and Sicilians. But we English who know Italy usually are taken possession of by it. I avoided Italy for years because I was bored by English people raving about it, and now I am the chief of all those English bores. One cannot escape one's fate.

In 1906, when I became fascinated by ballooning, Hichens was very interested and sympathetic at once, with his ready understanding. He even wished to accompany me in an ascent, but somehow we were never able to arrange this.

Sept. 20th, 1906

This morning I received your interesting letter which filled me with two opposing sentiments, pleasure and fear: pleasure at the thought of the good times you are having, fear at the prospect of your solitary ballooning. [I had intended qualifying for a pilot's certificate, in which case I would have had to make an ascent all by myself, but my interest in ballooning soon waned and this plan did not come off.]

I read your capital article in "The World." Go on writing. But I tremble to think you are going skywards

alone. Mayn't I come too? You are almost too daring, but I infinitely prefer the too daring to the too timid human being. The former has many rewards, the latter few or none. May you get your certificate! But please remember you can't be spared, and that many of us would very much miss you if you never came down like Nordica's first husband, and *don't* make a voyage aerial to the Pole!

. . . Next June I hope and expect to spend in London. I feel that if I don't I shall be too definitely the country cousin, shy, awkward, gauche and deplorable—a human parsnip! and the parsnip is only tolerated on a *jour maigre!* . . . In Marienbad I saw a lot of Beerbohm Tree, who was tremendously amusing and quite brilliant. The place was crammed and very gay. It was my first visit to a "cure" place, but I should hardly say the invalids were leading the simple life. Certainly their hats weren't. All the feathers of the world seemed to be waving in the wind beneath the pine trees. We dined, lunched and tea'd among thousands of our fellow creatures, and I never talked so much sheer scandal before. It was rather fun.

I paid two visits to Munich, which I like immensely. There I saw a lot of the Fairfax Cartwrights; she is charming, I think. They were in my hotel, waiting to find a house, as he is Minister there. We spoke of you.

It was in 1908 that I had a bad riding accident, my horse falling and partly rolling on me. I sustained a broken shoulder, crushed lung, concussion, and other minor damages. Hichens was in Taormina at the time, and wrote:

. . . What a really appalling experience! To me far the worst part of it would have been the lung trouble. I

think there is nothing nearly so vitally terrifying as the sensation of suffocation. It is a nightmare even to think about what you have suffered. I am truly thankful and rejoiced that you are getting over it, and need I say how very, very glad I am there is no injury to your beauty. No "Woman with the Fan" terror. Had there been I think you would have found many friends devoted to you for the inner woman, but disfigurement of any kind must make life almost insupportable to either man or woman, I should think. I know I am not at all an admirer of my own nose, but when I see poor ———'s I thank Heaven for comparative poverty and my nose, and prefer it infinitely to untold millions with his. Please don't think me vain. The papers said some very charming things about you. I wonder if you saw them. The accounts of the accident were, as usual, various and not always accurate. I thought the horse was jumping. Don Marcantonio must have passed a shocking hour or two!

Boy Middleton, the famous horseman whom I knew slightly, was killed by his horse putting its foot in a hole when he was leisurely cantering over some plowed land. I am, on the whole, a fatalist. One escapes frightful perils in savage lands, perhaps, and then is run over by a "growler" in the Bayswater Road, and dies unromantically on a London pavement. It must be all arranged. By whom? I wonder how you felt when so near death. Yes, whenever I have had an illness which has kept me for weeks in my room, I have had that rebellious feeling, "I am missing the blessed hours of life!" I hate to feel I am losing anything when one can't have so very much, and yet how many people don't grasp life at all, don't seem to wish really to live. You, I hope, have many delightful years and happy experiences ahead of you. I remember your once telling me you were so

lucky, so much luckier than your sister. Now you have had a stroke of ill luck. That score is wiped out and the luck should be renewed. . . .

It is good news that you expect to be in town, I hope you will allow me to see you. What about the balloon trip? I expect Prince Teano, after this accident, will protest against balloons, but if not, I should like to go up. . . . Once more—I am delighted that you are nearly out of the wood, and I hope soon you will be perfectly strong and sound.

As happens sometimes in life, our two paths separated and for many years Robert Hichens and I met no more, and our correspondence dwindled and died away. During the winter of 1928 I visited my friends Baron and Baronne Rodolphe d'Erlanger in their lovely home at Sidi-bou-Said, about fifteen miles from Tunis, and there learned that their only neighbor was Robert Hichens! He had rented a charming old Arab house near by and was as usual busy writing. It was with real joy on my side, and I think also on his, that we met again after such long years, and had so many things to talk over.

We walked on the sand dunes of Carthage, talking over past days and picking up all the threads of our old friendship, as wrapped in fur coats we shivered in the bitter African blast! A motor trip south, to Kerouan and Monastir, was made more delightful by his charming companionship, and when I decided to fly from Tunis to Antibes, though the start was at a very early hour, he wished to accompany me to the aerodrome and see me off. One of the fierce winds of Africa was blowing at the time, flinging sand in one's eyes and teeth; the gray choppy sea looked anything but inviting, and the

seaplane I was about to enter seemed particularly small and frail.

It was most comforting to have a friendly handshake at the last moment and see a kind, affectionate face looking up at me as we took off. It brought me luck during our flight across the Mediterranean, for we reached the French Riviera in record time.

CHAPTER VIII

WITH THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE AND SIR ERNEST CASSEL

TO the ex-Empress of the French, Eugénie, I owe the recollection of many happy days spent under her hospitable roof, either at Farnborough Hill or at Villa Cyrnos, Cap Martin. She was extremely "clannish," and loved having her Spanish and Italian relations around her. She knew to her finger tips how many relations she had and exactly how her family was connected with other families. In fact, she was very shocked when she discovered that I could not precisely define how I happened to be her great-great niece, except that my Colonna grandmother was an Alvarez de Toledo, and had been a cousin of hers. Next day she presented me with a sheet of note paper on which she had written out part of the family tree, all in her own neat handwriting, and she told me to learn it by heart. It is too sad to have to confess that I did not do so, and that now I have lost the paper!

I first saw the Empress at Farnborough Hill, when I was still a child, and visited her with my father and sister. We children were petrified with shyness. I remember the delightfully tactful way in which she received us, for, leaving our father to talk to Monsieur Pietri, she passed a hand through both our arms and led us down the gallery to a drawing-room where we were

alone, and there, talking gayly, she soon put us at our ease.

We were muffled up in veils, an absurd fashion which existed in those days also for little girls. The Empress said:

"Now, how are you going to put up your veils for lunch?"

My sister hurriedly pushed hers up just anyhow, exposing her mouth and the tip of her nose, and the Empress exclaimed:

"Mais non! C'est très laid comme ça, tu caches, tes yeux et tes cheveux!" and she arranged our veils for us herself.

Already then she was quite an old woman, with white hair neatly coiled at the top of her head, regular little features and ears laid back extremely flatly. The only trace of vanity remaining from old days was the touch of black at the corner of her eyes and the carefully penciled eyebrows. She invariably wore a black coat and skirt during the day time, and no jewelry except several plain gold rings all exactly alike, which she wore on the same finger and used often to play with, passing them from one hand to another when she spoke.

With my father she was very intimate. When he had been a very young man he had formed an unfortunate attachment in Rome, and my Spanish grandmother asked her cousin, the Empress, to help her in the matter. It was in the brief, brilliant years of the Second Empire, and young Marcantonio Colonna was sent to Paris where he spent several months at Court under the Empress's care, alternating between the splendors of the Tuileries and the delights of Compiègne where, needless to

say, he soon recovered from his ill-chosen love affair.

With the great interest she always took in family matters, she was delighted to hear of my engagement, which news my father had communicated to her at once, and she wrote to say so:

11.5.1901. Villa Cyrnos
Cap Martin

Mon cher Neveu,

C'est avec le plus grand plaisir que j'ai appris le mariage de Vittoria avec le Prince de Teano. L'union de deux grandes familles Romaines est un événement *rare* de nos jours. Tout se trouve réuni pour plaire dans ce mariage, aussi je me réjouis avec vous tous.

Mes félicitations aux fiancés et crois aux sentiments affectueux de ta tante

Eugénie

When she heard that the date of my wedding had been fixed, she wrote again to my father, this time from England:

Farnborough Hill
30.6.1

Mon cher Neveu,

Je te félicite encore une fois du mariage de ta fille, cela me fait aussi un grand plaisir et je serai charmée de voir le jeune couple, lorsequ'ils viendront passer quelques jours à Farnborough des qu'ils me feront savoir qu'ils sont en Angleterre.

Je vais passer le mois de Juillet en Écosse sur le "Thistle" et après Cowes je rentrerai à Farnborough vers le 14 Aout. S'ils veulent alors venir ce sera un grand plaisir pour moi et je compte sur toi pour le leur dire.

Crois, mon cher neveu, à mes sentiments affectueux.

Eugénie

It was only after my marriage that an annual visit to Farnborough Hill became our custom.

Her hospitality was on a noble scale, for she loved her grand-nephews and grand-nieces to make very long stays, and some of them would bring a friend along as well, who would be welcomed just as charmingly as the relations themselves.

The Empress never kissed her nieces on the cheek, as she said it was not nice for them to be embraced by an old woman, and she greeted us always with a touching little kiss on the shoulder. I have never known any other person of her age who understood and sympathized with youth and the tastes of youth as thoroughly as she did. She led her own quiet life and did not see much of her guests except at luncheon, tea and dinner, when the food was excellent and extraordinarily bountiful, for the Empress had a good appetite and enjoyed certain dishes, notably a "peach-fed" Spanish ham sent her from the estates of her nephew the Duke of Alba, which certainly was a dream.

During meals she was interested to know how every one had spent his time. The young people had horses at their disposal, both for riding and driving, plenty of bicycles, lawn tennis courts and, later, a hockey ground was made for them in the bit of land the Empress bought on the other side of the high road. This charming little property, consisting of a wood with pine trees, a lake and stretches of sandy soil with a profusion of heather, the Empress, with the calm philosophy so characteristic of her, had named Compiègne, as she said it reminded her of the forest in which she hunted during the days of the Empire.

Among the habitués of Farnborough Hill were the Duke of Alba and his brother, the Duke of Peneranda, both then unmarried; their sister, the delightful Dona Sol, now Duquesa di Santona, who after her marriage used also to come for long stays with her husband and babies; Solange de Lesseps, who charmed the Empress with her pleasant company and afterwards married a nephew of hers, the Conde de Mora; Solange's brother, the handsome Jacques de Lesseps, who lately died in an aeroplane crash in wildest Canada; Prince and Princess Clement Metternich—she was a Spaniard, daughter of the Duque de San Carlos and very beautiful; Comte Clary, who was amusing and artistic, and who died a tragic death a few years ago; my compatriot Conte Giuseppe Prinioli whose mother had been a Bonaparte and who belonged to another generation; my uncle, Prospero Colonna whose gayety always made him the life of every party. I must not forget dear Monsieur Pietri, who had been secretary to the late Emperor and was now the faithful companion of the Empress. We all loved him for his unfailing kindness and cheerful nature. He was a rugged little Corsican, with twinkling eyes and a gray beard, and he enjoyed the company of all the young people who came and stayed in the house, as well as that of the older guests.

It was wonderful to see the Empress and Monsieur Pietri walking out together every morning, both so old and so gray, and yet so full of mental vigor, with unfathomable depths of historical memories between them, that are now lost to us forever. They bickered quite a little, too, for Monsieur Pietri was perhaps the only person who argued with the Empress.

Often on going in to the dining room the Empress would stop short on feeling some one treading on her long train, and, wheeling round, would exclaim: "Ca, je sais d'avance, c'est Pietri!"

And he would grumble as his only apology: "L'impératrice fait cela exprés."

He died at Farnborough during the War, and before the end came his mind had given way. I am told his charming nature completely changed and he would lurk behind the armchair in his room with a paper knife in his hand, waiting for his enemies, like a true Corsican brigand.

As soon as luncheon was over the Empress encouraged her younger guests to scatter and play games, and several neighbors, including officers from Aldershot, used to come over daily and join in them. Her instructions were delivered beforehand with the gravity. She had enormous respect for British customs and was always terribly afraid we wouldn't take games with sufficient seriousness; in fact she doubted our ability to stick to the rules.

She would say with great firmness: "In a country where the Prime Minister plays lawn tennis [this was in Balfour's day] games are a very serious affair."

One day when several neighbors were expected to dinner, she gave us other instructions:

"In this country," she informed us, "general conversation is not the custom. People talk quietly to their neighbors. I must request you, *mes enfants,* not to shriek at each other across the table. *Cela ne se fait pas.*"

We promised we would be good and converse in a typically British way. So we did . . . till the fish! Then some one broke loose and a cross-fire of jokes began.

The dear old Empress threw up her hands and exclaimed tragically: *"Ca y est! Je ne les tiens plus!"*

Being young and lighthearted, the Spanish cousins and I used to indulge in the silliest of jokes. Once at luncheon I served one of them—I think it was Isabelle Metternich —with a catch that had been invented that year and has now sunk into the oblivion it deserves.

"Have you seen Arthur?" was the question. (This joke does not come off in a house that really contains an Arthur.)

Instinctively every one answers: "Arthur who?"

"Our thermometer!"

There was such a roar from our end of the table that the Empress wanted to know all about it. *"Je veux entendre la plaisanterie de Vittoria."* Her English had always been very limited, and of course it was impossible to translate the joke into French. I struggled to explain, all the cousins tried to help, but it was no good!

"Je ne comprends pas ce que Arthur ait à faire avec un thermometre. Arthur . . . et qui est Arthur? Non, c'est vraiment trop bête!"

There was a small building known as the Museum in the park at Farnborough, and I suppose, of course, it still exists, now that the place belongs to Prince Victor Napoleon. In it was a most interesting collection of Napoleonic relics—the famous gray coat and cocked hat of the great Napoleon, his coronation robes and those of the Empress Josephine, and many other fascinating souvenirs.

Monsieur Pietri was showing us everything one day, and he finally opened a cupboard drawer and pulled out the last tragic relic of the French Empire: a saddle, with a broken stirrup strap. It will be remembered how the

young Prince Imperial's life would have been saved in South Africa when he was surrounded by hostile natives, had he been able to mount his horse. But the stirrup leather gave way, his horse was a big one, maddened by fright, and he died, desperately facing the enemy alone. All the hopes of the French Imperialists were broken with that leather strap.

While we were looking at it a shadow fell across tne open doorway, and there stood the black figure of the Empress. She saw what we were looking at and covered her face with her hands. *"Cachez cela,"* she ordered.

Then when the saddle had been hurriedly bundled back and the drawer closed, she joined us and walked quietly round the room pointing out the various objects of interest in the glass cases.

Among the neighbors whom we saw most of was the celebrated Miss Ethel Smythe, the composer, who has spoken charmingly of the Empress and the Farnborough Hill *milieu* in the memoirs she has published.

We all delighted in her, for she was always entertaining and cheered us up with her great vitality and ready wit. Her friendship with the Empress was most curious as two more different natures can scarcely be imagined, but the Empress appreciated her clever brain though she sometimes shook her head and murmured: "Elle est vraiment trop bataillière."

Ethel Smythe often dined at Farnborough Hill and it was her custom to bicycle over from her cottage, take up a good strategic position behind some bushes when once in the park and proceed to change into evening clothes, after which she would walk up to the front door and ring the bell. After this had gone on for some months

the Empress got to hear of it and was rather upset, so in future a carriage was sent for her guest. I am sure my old friend will forgive my saying—and will also agree with me—that this innovation did not make any difference in her personal appearance, her great charm being an utter lack of feminine vanity.

I remember once she turned up rather late for dinner and the Empress was already in the drawing-room. This was contrary to Farnborough etiquette, which demanded that all the guests should be assembled before the Empress made her appearance. Ethel advanced towards her hostess, running and curtesying at the same time, the result being a series of kangaroo leaps. A minute later my Aunt beckoned to me and whispered: "Emmène Miss Smythe et arrange un peu sa robe."

Whereupon I obeyed and a certain amount of hitching up went on in the long gallery outside.

"My dear," said the great musician, still breathless and wriggling, "I'll tell you what's the matter. I bought a new pair of corsets at the grocer's and I believe he sold me a birdcage by mistake."

Later on she neglected her music for a time and became a militant suffragette, which thrilled us much more as none of us were particularly musical and we all preferred excitement. We never tired of getting her to tell us her experiences; how she was arrested and what prison was like. I can still see her sitting on the grass under an oak tree on a golden summer evening, surrounded by an admiring ring of young Spaniards and Italians. She invariably wore a rough tweed skirt, a man's shirt with a stiff collar and a red tie and a hard straw sailor hat, and smoked like a chimney.

"I was in Berkeley Square," she told us, "and I said to the policeman, 'Which is Mr. Harcourt's house?' He answered, 'I don't know,' and I said, *'Don't* you? Then I'll show you!' and I threw the stone I had in my muff and smashed a window to smithereens. [We all gasped with delight.] The policeman said, 'I felt it coming! Will you go quietly, Miss?'"

We were all rather disappointed to hear she *did* go quietly.

In prison Ethel was put to sew policemen's trousers. As she had never held a needle in her life she pointed out to the authorities that it was pretty rough on the policemen, but she had to do it all the same.

All this was long ago. Now women's votes and women members of Parliament form part of everyday life in England, and one is already forgetting the desperate fight made by a group of plucky women to obtain these results. No doubt during the War women drew attention to themselves in a nobler way, and had it not been for that the militant suffragettes might have gone on striving in vain for years.

Public opinion was against them and they were nicknamed the "unenjoyed." I remember once at Newmarket the latest suffragette outrage was being discussed before King Edward. They had done something particularly iniquitous that week, but the King didn't take any part in the conversation till the end, when he said one word, with quiet decision. It was "Beasts!"

The Empress loved the sea and owned a yacht called the *Thistle* on which she often went for long cruises, usually accompanied by my uncle Prospero Colonna and

Conte Giuseppe Primoli, but as I am a bad sailor I preferred her Farnborough and Cap Martin hospitality.

She was one of the first to possess a gramophone when they were first invented, and told with glee a little anecdote of how once when she was sitting on the deck of the *Thistle* at Cowes she put on a record of a rather vulgar comic ditty, and a sailor nearly fell overboard with astonishment, thinking that the Empress herself was breaking into song.

I enjoyed staying with the Empress at Cap Martin even more than at Farnborough, perhaps on account of the fascinating neighborhood of Monte Carlo and its casino; but there seemed a fate against my going there so often. Twice in one year we had to put off our visit. Once just when we were ready to leave my father-in-law did not allow us to start as he wished my husband to attend to some business for him. I wrote very sadly to the Empress in my disappointment, and she answered at once with one of her charming tactful letters.

Villa Cyrnos
Cap Martin

8.3.7

MA BIEN CHÉRE NIÉCE,

Je suis désolée du motif qui vous a empéché de venir mais je comprends que le premier devoir de ton mari est d'aider son Père dans les difficultés qui ont surgi dans ses propriétés de la campagne romaine. Je serai heureuse si les choses se rétablissent et vous pouvez vous absenter en Avril d'avoir votre visite. Je ne puis, dès aujourd'hui fixer une date parceque j'attends du monde mais dès que ce sera possible je te dirai le moment où je suis libre, espérant qu'il coincidera avec vos plans.

J'ai eu la grippe et je suis encore souffrante. Le temps n'est pas ce qu'il devrait être dans cette saison.

Je t'embrasse de tout cœur.

Ton affectueuse Tante

EUGÉNIE

J'attends aujourd'hui Prospero mais comme il n'a pas donné son adresse à Milan, la lettre lui disant qu'il pouvait venir a du passer par Rome: ce n'est pas très pratique.

A month later, when I was hoping to bring off our deferred visit, I had a very bad accident while riding on the Roman Campagna with my cousin Marcantonio Colonna.

This time the Empress wrote to my husband:

Villa Cyrnos
3.4.7. Cap Martin

MON CHER NEVEU,

Je suis désolée de l'accident qui me prive du grand plaisir de vous avoir à Cyrnos, j'espère que Vittoria ne fera pas d'imprudences en voulant aller plus vite que de raison en chemin de fer; j'avais bien vu dans le New York Herald qu'elle s'etait faite une contusion a l'épaule mais je ne me doutais pas que cela fût aussi serieux. Il faut faire usage de votre autorité pour la faire se soigner: vous me dédommagerez en venant plus tard à Farnborough.

Croyez, mon cher neveu, à mes sentiments bien affectueux

EUGÉNIE

At Cap Martin life was more or less as at Farnborough; the same "Empire" atmosphere pervaded both houses, full of souvenirs of the Napoleonic period and portraits of the Empress and her ladies, in the full flush of their youth and beauty, painted by Winterhalter.

The casino of Monte Carlo took the place of tennis and hockey, and the Empress with her wonderful understanding was always ready to send the young people off in her automobile for a little flutter at the tables. Needless to say she had never been there herself. Moreover, though we often tried to explain to her the rules of roulette and trente-et-quarante, she couldn't grasp them in the least. She occasionally presented us with a louis to put on for her, but as we invariably lost it she failed to understand the charm of the casino. All the same she would gayly call out: "Eh bien! on a gagné?" every time we came back, and enjoyed hearing all the details of the expedition.

I once arrived at Cap Martin having lost my luggage, and being extremely young was depressed at the prospect of visiting Monte Carlo in my traveling clothes.

The Empress wished to lend me a hat. She always possessed three, that were distinguished by name—*Trottinette* was the morning hat, and *Va-t-en-ville* the afternoon one, while *Le Glorieux* was reserved for very special occasions. She wished me to wear *Le Glorieux* at Monte Carlo and was rather vexed at my refusal. "Tu ne veux même pas Le Glorieux? Mais il a trois plumes!" I still regret not having been able to overcome my self-consciousness; it would have been far better to have appeared in the casino crowned with the Empress's three nodding plumes than to have hurt her feelings. She had been the supreme leader of fashion in Paris in her day, and all that remained of that period of glory were a few old dresses which one day she amused herself by making me try on. The crinolines were charming and made one feel like an animated flower, but the quaint little bodices were quite impossible

to squeeze into, at least for me. "Et pourtant Dieu sait que je ne me serrais pas," said the Empress proudly.

The War came and swept us all apart, upsetting our entire existence. I saw her in the spring of 1915, when part of Farnborough Hill had been turned into a hospital for officers, and I lunched with her and a few of the convalescent patients. This was just before Italy entered the War. I then went back to my own country, and we met no more.

A friend of mine called on her some time afterwards. She asked about all her Italian relations and especially about me, saying how grieved she was at my marriage having turned out so unhappily after having seen us both so often, gay, lighthearted, and devoted to each other, in her house.

My friend, rather at a loss for something to say, murmured:

"Les hommes valent bien peu. . . ."

The old Empress straightened herself up and grasped her visitor's arm.

"Mais nous sommes seules, n'est-ce pas, Madame?" Her sight had almost completely failed. "Eh bien, alors je vous dirai: *ils ne valent rien.*"

A sad conclusion to arrive at after a long life which had been fuller of experience than that of most human beings.

In her young days my grandmother had met the famous Contessa di Castiglione and apparently not liked her. So many books have been written about this lady that it is almost unnecessary to recall that she was supposed to be the most beautiful woman of her day. She was Cavour's niece, and came to Paris during the Second Empire, sent,

so they said, by her uncle on a secret political mission, her first task being to make the conquest of the Emperor Napoleon III, and in this, at least, she succeeded admirably.

The Empress, whose jealousy was aroused, was very anxious to catch a glimpse of the famous beauty, and with the connivance of a lady-in-waiting, was concealed in the house of a friend when the latter was entertaining all Paris with a fancy dress ball.

Thus she saw Contessa di Castiglione, a most exquisite vision, robed as Diana the Huntress, and even the embittered Empress had to admire. But she noticed that the Contessa wore a tiny heart on a bangle round her slim ankle, and said sharply:

"Oui, elle est bien belle, mais son cœur est placé trop bas!"

"La Castiglione's" beauty was only equaled by her conceit. She used to say that it was impossible for her to walk in the street otherwise than wearing two or three thick veils to avoid being mobbed by the admiring crowds; but my grandmother said this was nonsense, for her beauty was of a very delicate description, with small features and pale complexion, so that it did not attract immediate attention and required to be looked at closely to be thoroughly appreciated. My grandmother remembered when Contessa di Castiglione came to London and a dinner was given in her honor, I believe at Holland House, to which all the English beauties of the day were invited, among others my grandmother. She said that "La Castiglione" kept them all waiting half an hour, an unheard of thing in those days, and finally floated in looking a perfect dream, with a dress of snow-white tulle over an

enormous crinoline, and a wreath of purple pansies in her hair. My grandmother said regretfully, "None of us could hold a candle to her!"

Unfortunately she did not tell me the names of the other beauties present at the dinner.

She said that Contessa di Castiglione sat near Frederick Leighton, the painter, afterwards Lord Leighton, and almost at once held out for his inspection her hand and arm, as a model of perfection! Leighton said afterwards that she was the most beautiful and also the vainest woman he had ever met.

The Empress Eugénie died in Madrid in the house of her nephew, the Duke of Alba. He told me that when she arrived she drove from the station to his house in an open carriage pointing out rapturously to her faithful maid, Aline, all the principal buildings on the way. When begged to put on her dark spectacles, she answered proudly: "Le soleil d'Espagne n'a jamais fait mal aux yeux."

I am thankful she lived to see Germany defeated and the war of 1870 avenged. It was also wonderful that the end came when she was in her own country, Spain, that she loved so passionately and had not seen for so many long years.

After the death of my dear grandmother in the autumn of 1906 the house in Eaton Square, which had been my English home for so many years, was dismantled and shut up, and for the first time I felt a lonely foreigner in London. It was then that I realized the value of English friendship, for all my friends had only one idea, that I should continue to come to London yearly, and kind invi-

tations reached me from all sides. But it was the late Mrs. Wilfred Ashley, with whom I had become acquainted during the gayeties of the London season, who wrote me the most charming letter of all, as she guessed how lonely I was, and asked me to consider her home mine whenever I came to England. This was the beginning of a very deep friendship between us, that lasted until her tragic death from consumption, in 1911, at the early age of thirty.

The several long stays I made in her charming house in Bruton Street and at Colonel Ashley's beautiful family seat, Broadlands, are among the happiest recollections of my life.

Mrs. Ashley was the only daughter of the great financier, Sir Ernest Cassel, and had in a great measure inherited his keen intellect. She was a delightful companion, with a great sense of humor and *joie de vivre*. She was not as beautiful as her daughter, Lady Louis Mountbatten, has become, but she had the most exquisite complexion I have ever seen, clear hazel eyes, and very pretty hands and feet. She was very popular wherever she went and frankly enjoyed society, though her health was so delicate that she got terribly overtired. I think she enjoyed a good game of bridge, and now and then some poker, as much as anything, and, for those days, played rather high stakes. It was very bitter that she who had so much in life to make her happy should have been denied the one essential—good health.

Owing to my great friendship with his daughter I saw a good deal of Sir Ernest Cassel, with whom I became very intimate. He was not an easy man to get on with, and his temper was somewhat alarming. I often won-

dered what his servants felt when he began to clench his fists at the dining-room table, a sign of some furious comment soon to follow; but they were evidently so accustomed to it that they remained quite unperturbed. Even with his only daughter whom he adored there were occasional flare-ups, and sometimes even I got a snubbing, but on the whole he was the soul of kindness and I think he was very fond of me.

He certainly liked to have us both run in and out of his beautiful home, Brook House, which now belongs to his granddaughter, Lady Louis Mountbatten.

I was Cassel's guest in Egypt for quite a long while. My husband had planned a journey in Syria on his own account, and it was decided that I was to accompany him as far as Egypt and await his return to Cairo. But when Cassel heard of this arrangement he would not allow me to be alone there and insisted on my joining his party, which consisted of the Wilfred Ashleys, an old business friend of his, Mr. Jacob Schiff of New York, and Mrs. Schiff. Both Cassel and Schiff were of course of German origin, and each had made an enormous fortune by banking, one in England and the other in America. Mr. Jacob Schiff was very proud of being an American citizen. He spoke exactly as though he had arrived from Frankfurt the day before, in spite of forty years in the United States. He was a charming old man, the soul of honesty and honor, and deeply attached to his religion. I developed a sincere regard and friendship for him, and also for Mrs. Schiff, during our travels together.

We were all Cassel's guests in Cairo for about six weeks, after which he took us up the Nile on a steam dahabeah for a delightful three weeks, when of course

we visited all the lovely places on the Nile as far as Wadi-Halfa. Once there, he asked us to decide whether we preferred visiting Khartoum or Jerusalem, as he hadn't time for both. We all chose Jerusalem, so we steamed back to Cairo and then took a steamer from Alexandria to Jaffa.

I remember a most ridiculous incident during our landing.

There was a strong swell, which is the usual thing at Jaffa, and the rowboat which was to take us ashore was alternately level with the deck and at quite an enormous depth below. Timing themselves exactly to choose the right instant the sailors practically threw us into the boat. At that moment an old American gentleman suddenly popped his head over the side of the ship and declared that as he had a Cook's ticket he had a right to get into the boat with us. He distinctly hadn't as the boat had been specially reserved for Cassel's party, but he completely lost his temper and roared at us like a bull, all the louder as we were going down, down, down into the green abysmal depths, and he was afraid we might miss the best of his remarks. Then our boat shot swiftly up again till we literally rubbed noses with our infuriated tourist, smiled and murmured politely: "The boat is reserved for us"; and dropped down once more before he could retort otherwise than with a roar that followed us into the lower regions. This happened several times, and was an incredibly funny scene. Cassel, who was capable of getting into such towering rages himself, was quite enchanted with the fury of the American tourist.

While we were lunching at Jaffa, Cassel was handed a

telegram from Mrs. Bishoffsheim, begging him to return at once to London as her husband was dying. I believe that it was in "Bish's" bank that Cassel began his career as an office boy, and a very deep friendship united the two men. Though he had a great desire to see Jerusalem, he didn't hesitate for a moment and decided to return on another ship that was just about to start. It was arranged that we should proceed on our journey as Mr. Schiff's guests instead. He proved himself the kindest and most considerate of hosts and I remember being overcome with confusion on discovering that he had ordered a special train to convey us from Jaffa to Jerusalem, simply because I had said I disliked making an early morning start!

Mr. Schiff and I did a lot of sightseeing together, and as we were of two different religions we were very careful not to hurt each other's feelings. He came with me to Roman Catholic ceremonies, which interested him a good deal, and I accompanied him to see the Jews wail at the wall of their ruined Temple, rather nervous lest he was going to wail too. But he was only a reverent spectator, much grieved that there should be so many curious onlookers at a ceremony which had such a deep significance for him. I tried to comfort him with the assurance that it was nothing compared to the tourists who crowd into St. Peter's in Rome during the singing of the "Miserere" in Holy Week.

I must say the sight at the wall was most remarkable, chiefly because of the contrast in appearance and behavior of the older generation compared with the younger. There were old men in purple velvet dressing gowns and big fur caps, their gray hair hanging in ringlets on their

shoulders, swaying backwards and forwards in a positive ecstasy of grief, tears running down their cheeks and their faces turned to the wall; while near them stood young men in flashy check suits, bright ties, and Panama hats, murmuring their prayers in a perfunctory manner, and giving the glad eye over their shoulder to the lady tourists who were watching the scene.

Mr. Jacob Schiff and I went to Bethlehem together in a victoria drawn by two horses, with an imposing looking dragoman seated near the coachman. It was a charming drive, in ideal weather. When we got there the dragoman leaped off the box and pointed to the village with a dramatic gesture.

"Sir!" he exclaimed, "this is Bethlehem."

Schiff looked very serious and thought for a moment.

"Ach!" he said, "and vere can ve have our tea?"

Another day we drove down to the Dead Sea and the Jordan and spent a night at Jericho, and I loved the road through the olive trees and the brilliance of the poppies dotted in the grass. Coming as we did from Egypt, where everything that is shown dates from several centuries B.C., I had the sensation that our Lord's period was not much further removed from us than the French revolution.

I spent some happy hours painting in the Garden of Gethsemane, with a distant view of the gate of Jerusalem through which Jesus Christ rode on his ass on that first Palm Sunday. A dear old Italian monk kept me company and showed me a photograph of his picture painted by John Sargent.

Mr. Schiff's charity towards his coreligionists was un-

bounded. The last evening we were in Jerusalem he spent all his time after dinner writing checks for various Jewish charitable institutions, all for very considerable sums, and when we left the hotel next morning we were nearly overwhelmed by the thanks of the grateful old gentlemen in velvet robes and fur toques who were waiting outside.

The hem of my coat was humbly kissed by them, who were under the false impression that I was also their benefactress, and I passed through the crowd of rabbis with a halo of merit round my head that was entirely undeserved.

Cassel was a more worldly and polished type of financier, honored by King Edward's friendship and in a way, I suppose, more run after than any man in London. I was devoted to his elder sister, Mrs. "Bobbie" Cassel, who kept house for him and was the dearest soul alive. Sir Ernest's Scotch wife died when she was very young indeed, leaving one tiny baby, and Mrs. Bobbie brought up little Maudie with as much love and tender care as she gave to her own children, even more, so she told me, because she was so delicate. She never lost her strong German accent and worshiped her "bruzzer," of whom I think she was also rather afraid.

Her "Spoonerisms" were proverbial, and Maudie Ashley and I delighted in them and collected them carefully. She would greet her guests with a cheery invitation to "come to their hair and tidy their rooms" before luncheon, and I have known her to affirm that Cambridge was forty miles away "as the cock crows," and also that "it is a long worm that has no turning!"

After King Edward's death Sir Ernest Cassel led a more retired life and gave up business altogether. I think his daughter's death broke his heart. He struggled to save her life with everything that science could invent and money could procure. Nothing was too much trouble or too expensive. At the Assouan hotel he engaged three floors to insure her not being disturbed by the slightest noise, and chartered a private steamer to bring her back to England. During the last months of her life, when she lived in a bungalow in the gardens of Broadlands—a last desperate attempt to combine the open-air cure with her wish to be in her own home—he showered gifts of jewels, furs, and money on her, but she was too ill then to care for what would have given her so much delight a few years before.

I went several times to stay at Broadlands during those sad days, and Maudie with her unfailing sense of humor would show me feebly her father's gifts. "And all I need now are a few nightgowns," she would murmur. He even gave her a most valuable Pekinese, who rather bored her, and who—according to her account—disliked her so much that he had to be chained to the bed-post during Papa's visit, not to hurt his feelings.

After poor Maudie's death Cassel was a broken man, and it was pitiful to see him sitting alone at Brook House, surrounded by everything that money could buy, and yet so utterly miserable.

"Money never brought me any happiness," he said to me the last time we met. That was before the War, which came to crush his soul more utterly. I did not see him during those years, but I know he led the

quietest of lives, giving most generously to every possible fund and utterly loyal to his adopted country. But he suffered greatly, and the end was one which I am sure he would have chosen—to be found sitting at his writing table at Brook House, sleeping the eternal sleep, and at peace at last.

It was during the War between Italy and Turkey that I had rather a curious experience.

I was in Rome at the time, when I received a letter from one of the members of the Government, asking at what hour I could receive him, as he had to speak to me on an important matter that was strictly confidential. I fixed an appointment, and I confess I never felt more curious in my life.

He turned up, punctual and pompous, and all doors being carefully closed he explained the motive of his visit with carefully chosen words. It had come to his ears that the great British financier, Sir Ernest Cassel, was arranging a loan for Turkey. There could be no doubt as to the ultimate result of the War, but this loan to the Turks might prolong it a few months, which was undesirable. He happened to know that I was an intimate friend of Cassel's. Was I a good Italian? Did I want a place in history? Did I want to go down to posterity as having done a really fine thing? I was to prevent this loan being made to our enemy, *at all costs*.

He was so earnest that it seemed hopeless to explain that my influence on Cassel was not unbounded, and in any case could have no effect on his financial plans. So I took the attitude of looking solemn and saying I would do what I could, upon which my important visitor left,

satisfied at having, as he thought, arranged the whole matter!

As far as I can remember, I wrote to a woman friend of mine in London, who was also a friend of Cassel's, and as a postscript to my letter, added:

"I hear Sir Ernest is lending money to the Turks. Tell him from me that he's a wretch!"

I do not know whether the message was ever delivered, but anyway Italy won the War, and I hope my poor member of the Government, who now has also joined the Great Majority, went to his grave fondly imagining that his Machiavellian scheme had worked satisfactorily.

CHAPTER IX

SOME CELEBRITIES

I HAVE always had an instinctive liking for people who *do* something, whatever their particular line happens to be, either artistic, literary, political, sporting or adventurous; anything, in fact, that makes them stand out from the dull gray mass of ordinary human beings.

My first illustrious friend was the Poet Laureate, Alfred Austin, who called on my grandmother when I was staying at Merton Hall as a girl, and as she was still in her room I was sent down to entertain him.

To my critical young eyes he seemed very old and very small and very gray, but it pleased his poetic fancy to bestow romance as a halo on his account of our first meeting.

"The door opened," he told a mutual friend, "and I saw before me the living impersonation of the Renaissance, the perfect type of the Roman, who said to me: 'I am Vittoria Colonna.' "

He always maintained that the unexpectedness of this meeting in an old country house in Norfolk bowled him over, and for some years we kept in touch, chiefly by his writing me poems, one of which still survives in an album, and which at the time was a source of much merriment and chaff from my young friends:

Lady of the Race Divine
From the land of fig and vine,

In whose limbs the tide still flows
Of the Goddess white that rose
From the morning-freshened foam
And whose offspring founded Rome.
When the Trojan city fell.
You who blend with Southern spell
Northern candour, and combine
With your Latin lineage, mine;
Along English lawn and lane
When the woods were on the wane,
With me wandered round and round
Sabine tread on Saxon ground.
Is it fancy that you share
With the sounding name you bear
Her great soul and soarings high
Who beneath Tyrrhinean sky
Wedded early, widowed long,
Soothed her twilight years with song?
And if Heaven will grant to me
All I wish that you may be
You will have but half her fate:
Without loneliness be great;
And, could Time but backward flow,
I, your Michelangelo!

Long years have passed, the little Poet Laureate is in his grave, and I fear his works are not much read. But the poem he wrote for me when I was eighteen and Vittoria Colonna does not make me laugh any more.

You will have but half her fate:
Without loneliness be great; . . .

Well, I have had half her fate, but I have had the loneliness without the greatness.

From the early years of my marriage until the cruel 1914 that broke up the lives of practically every one I know, I was always glad to be able to offer hospitality to any one interesting who passed through Rome, and many pleasant gatherings did we have up on the second floor of the grim Palazzo Caetani in the "Street of the Dark Shops."

I remember Sir Ernest Shackleton coming to lunch, when he had lately become the hero of the South Pole. I never saw a human being who gave one a greater impression of vitality. Electricity seemed to flash from his blue eyes and crisp hair; his enormously broad shoulders and broad hands were awe-inspiring in their strength, and his white teeth looked quite capable of scrunching up bones.

A minor tragedy occurred that day. The cook had composed the airiest of menus in his honor, made up entirely of mousses and soufflés, and other slops, quite nice to taste, but every course had to be eaten with a spoon, and it seemed to me hard lines on a man who had just returned from semi-starvation in Antarctic regions! But Shackleton made light of this *contretemps* and our luncheon was very gay all the same.

The great Pierpont Morgan was another friend of my very young years, and he used to enjoy taking me over his house in Prince's Gate and showing me all his art treasures which I loved, especially the wonderful miniatures. I was also very fond of the room with exquisite panels painted by Fragonard for Madame du Barry, and which she refused to accept on account of the lonely

little lady sitting in a deserted garden he depicted on the last panel, for she interpreted it as a prophecy of her own end. Had she but known that her fate was to be far worse than desertion!

Pierpont Morgan used to allow me to visit his house even when he was engaged and could not receive me, and I would pass many a happy hour looking over my old favorites.

I remember his dining with us one night when he was in Rome and playing bridge afterwards, with the comical result that he had no money to pay his losses! It was the Duke of Sparta, afterwards King Constantine of Greece, who lent him what he needed to settle his debts.

Elgar, the composer, also lunched with us on his way through Rome. I thought him rather solemn and pompous, but I have always been rather frightened of musicians, not being very musical myself, and am ashamed at having to confess that I don't understand Beethoven and infinitely prefer Puccini.

This reminds me that I first met Puccini comparatively recently only a year or two before his death. We sat near each other in the stalls at La Scala in Milan, during the first performance of Boito's *Nerone,* and a mutual friend introduced us. He spoke Italian with a decided Tuscan accent and was agreeable, but from his abrupt exclamations and occasional growls and grunts I gathered he did not think much of *Nerone.*

Charles Wyndham and Mary Moore, that most charming pair of actors, came often to Palazzo Caetani, and I saw them also in England, continuing our pleasant acquaintanceship.

But, talking of actors and actresses, I think the most

curious personality I ever met was that of Eleonora Duse. I first knew her when she was well over middle-aged and had practically retired from the stage. In fact, I only saw her act twice: once at a private party given by my dear friend the first Mrs. Wilfred Ashley at her house in Bruton Street, in 1904. I think it was one of the very few times, if not the only one, that she acted in a private house. She had a horror of meeting people socially, and her hypersensitive nature made her shrink from things that most of us face without a qualm.

I was dragged up afterwards to make her acquaintance, and I remember the "at bay" look in her dark eyes which immediately softened when she heard my few words of Italian and realized that I was a compatriot. She always looked as though she were suffering, and so many of the ordinary things of life pained her that I suppose she was most of the time. It gave an interesting look to her face which in itself was not strictly beautiful, though her low brow with the gray hair springing from it in two wings was admirable. I suppose her artistic temperament made her very difficult to live with, but as a friend with whom to have occasional intercourse I have met no one more agreeable. She seemed to *see* and feel intangible things with a crystal-like clearness of perception and describe them with an exquisite choice of words. After speaking with her, everybody else's ideas seemed wrapped up in cotton-wool through which they emerged laboriously.

After that first meeting I sent her a few roses and I still have her note of thanks, written with the broad dashes and long lines so characteristic of her handwriting.

"Serbo ricordo dolcissimo del breve incontro," she wrote, "e spero ripeterlo forse un giorno." *

It was during the same season that she gave what I believe was her last performance in London of *La Dama delle Camelie*. I had other engagements that evening, but managed to break away from everything and get to the theater in time for the last act. I went and saw her afterwards in her dressing-room, and again my Italian seemed to soothe her troubled spirit. Though her French was very fluent I think she never learned English, and in spite of her many travels always felt lost out of Italy.

"Ci rivedremo a Roma," she said, with her rare smile that was so unexpectedly brilliant.

And it was in Rome, as she said, that we were destined to meet again and see a good deal of each other.

I have many of her notes and letters. She wrote in exquisite Italian which loses something of its charm in translation. I think this note must have been written soon after her arrival in Rome:

Thank you, Princess, for remembering me. I had not yet dared to write, but I was awaiting a favorable hour in which to repeat what I have always told you, that I am affectionate and grateful. My health is so-so; rather better than worse compared to last year, but rather worse than better if one judges that Life should be activity, work and risk.

As you allow me I will come one of these days, but pray tell me the day and the hour when I will not find a crowd *chez vous.*

A vous de tout cœur.

* "I keep a very sweet remembrance of the brief meeting, and hope to repeat it perhaps some day."

And then, a little later, on "Santa Vittoria":

Good wishes and greetings and a few roses for you, Princess, of whom I remember the kindness and the beautiful smile.

Eleonora Duse

She was so frail in health and so nervous of every shadow that crossed her path, I often wondered how she had survived any of the ruder shocks of life.

One day we had arranged that she was to come to luncheon alone with me and my husband, because she absolutely refused to meet any one else. She arrived ten minutes before the established hour, looking miserable, agitated, almost moaning in her distress. She said she had come in person to explain that she couldn't possibly come to lunch! She felt too nervous, too ill, it was beyond her strength, she was a wreck, her life was over. She went on explaining until the butler flung open the door and announced that luncheon was served. I let her have her say and then gently suggested that as she was here she might as well come into the dining-room with us. After a moment's hesitation she tore off her hat and flung it on a chair, pushed up her two wings of gray hair, and came along. She ended by making quite a good meal and talking all the time with extraordinary charm and brilliance. But I quite understand that her *impresarios* nearly went mad!

I think it was the following winter, in Rome, that Eleonora Duse founded a sort of club or home of rest for "tired artists," under which term she wished to include actresses and writers and almost every one who earned their living with their brains. She called her

Myself

institution "Un Libro e un Fiore," and the idea was that any tired worker should be able to go there and be given a book and a flower with which to refresh their souls. Dear Duse, always an unpractical dreamer! She wrote and asked me to come to the opening ceremony. I remember it was on the top floor of a little house on the outskirts of Rome, the "new quarter," very difficult to find and only approached by a peculiarly muddy road, as yet unpaved. There was a fairly large crowd, chiefly of women. I do not know whether they were workers, or tired, but they certainly looked rather queer. Duse stood at the top of the stairs and kissed us all indiscriminately as we panted up to her. What eventually became of "Un Libro e un Fiore" I don't know, but I fear that it lasted little more than a flower and very much less than a book.

It was later, in the winter of 1912, that Eleonora Duse, who was then living hidden in a very small and quiet pension of Rome, came to me begging for my help in a matter which seemed to her of unsurmountable difficulty.

A young Italian poetess, who was a friend of hers, had written a play and Duse, with her impulsive enthusiasm, had promised to act it, but now she felt she simply could not do so. She did not wish to return to the stage; she had no longer the health or the strength, but she was miserable at letting down her friend. Could I suggest anything; could I help her out of this awful difficulty? It seemed that the young poetess was in urgent need of money, and also of some sort of moral satisfaction after her great disappointment. If we could find some way of helping her at once, perhaps later on

Duse would be able to pull herself together and act in the play after all.

By dint of questioning I discovered that the poetess, whose Christian name was Cordelia, had a good grounding of literature and read well. So I suggested a course of lectures on the history of Italian poetry, from the earliest times down to the present day, which could take place twice a week in my drawing-room for a chosen group of friends. Duse was enthusiastic. This would be the financial help and moral sop she wanted for her young friend. We drew up together the list of people we would ask to attend the lectures, and the contribution we would each pay. Everything seemed settled in the most satisfactory manner; Duse flung her arms round me and embraced me tenderly and was all gratitude.

Then the following morning I got this letter:

Princesse, je vous dis merci de tout mon cœur, for the sweet greeting of yesterday and the gifts of the heart and intellect that I found in every one of your words.

If I dare write this morning it is because I fear I have made a mistake in asking you to provide the means which will allow a soul in trouble to await her fate: a soul which for culture and intellect surpasses the usual normal level. But I fear that to engage her in a course of lectures will trouble her greatly, given her acute sensitiveness and the condition of her spirit. She is searching her way and has not been able to find it on account of the trouble that blinds her. And so, Princess, it would be a great sorrow to me if it were not for her good that we should start this wished for communion

of souls, but one must realize that the sea lies between the difficulties of life and the dreams that nourish art.

To better explain my request I pray you, Princess, to give me two minutes of conversation this morning toward midday. If you can grant me this favor I will climb your not *too* tiring stairs! Your kindness, Princess, seems to me not only that of the heart but that which lives by understanding love that grasps everything and can find balm for all.

I beg therefore that before you see the person in question, let me speak to you briefly. I thank you gratefully and am full of good hope.

ELEONORA DUSE

At twelve o'clock Duse arrived, once more looking miserable, agitated, and almost moaning in her distress.

She had thought it all over and the young poetess would surely die of the horror of the whole thing, baring her artistic soul to the limelight of lectures; it was much better that she should quietly starve.

I was able to counteract Duse's artistic anguish with my practical common sense. I suggested that I should see the young poetess tête-à-tête and find out exactly what she would like us to do. Duse departed moaning, but a little comforted. Though I loved her, my sympathies were still with her harassed *impresarios.*

Cordelia came to see me, and anything less like my idea of a young poetess I cannot imagine. She had short hair like a man—in days when shingling was not the fashion—a *pince-nez* and a tight black dress, something between a priest's cassock and a riding habit. Her self-possession was extreme. One thing was quite clear: her artistic soul did not shrink from the publicity of

lectures, and the arrangement I suggested would be extremely useful to her.

I settled every detail satisfactorily, and then wrote to Duse that all was well.

The lectures proved quite agreeable in the warm semi-darkness of my drawing-room. I think we were only about a dozen friends present in all. Duse came regularly and brought me each time an armful of tiny bunches of fresh violets that she would tumble into my lap murmuring:

"They are so cold! Nurse them."

It was a sad winter, for my father was desperately ill, and died towards the end of January. Duse gave me much loving sympathy and we arranged that the lectures should be transferred to another friend's house. When she left Rome after they were over, she wrote:

I am near you in thought, Princess, and how many memories and hopes and how much of our life comes back into our hearts at the moment of farewell!

I say to you in my heart words of sweetness and of reason. I say to you, thanks for having been so good and so beautiful and so generous of yourself and so perfect in soul and form; for having welcomed us all with your smile when in your heart there was so much anxiety and sorrow. . . .

May you be rewarded, Princess, for this act of graciousness and for having known how to overcome your own sorrow and smile—to do good to others.

Thank you for everything, and I dare to say I hope to see you again some day.

With devotion, gratitude and deep tenderness.

ELEONORA DUSE

We did not meet again very often after that winter. Though she returned to Rome to act a few times when financial difficulties made it imperative for her to return to the stage, I was not there at the time.

It saddens me to think that she had to struggle with nerves and bad health, in hopes of making enough money to live quietly in her old age, and then never reached her goal; for she died practically alone in a city in the United States without seeing her beloved Italy again.

From Eleonora Duse my thoughts turn instinctively to Gabriele d'Annunzio, their two geniuses being so closely linked together. I have been on friendly terms with the poet for a great many years, though now, on account of the tenacity with which he clings to the shores of Lake Garda, we have not met for a long time.

It was a mutual friend, Clemente Origo, who brought us together. We were discussing d'Annunzio whom I had met at some party. He had been introduced just as I was leaving and he was arriving and we had only exchanged a few words. I had found his words well chosen and his voice pleasant, but I ventured to say I thought he gave himself airs. Origo was indignant.

"He is the simplest and most charming man on earth!" he exclaimed. "If you knew him better you would never say a thing like that."

A month or two later I was at the Hotel Crillon in Paris when Gabriele d'Annunzio came to call on me. "Origo has sent me," he said; "he says I am to convince you that I am not a poseur."

I did not even have a private sitting-room, so we sat in a corner of the hall downstairs. Soon afterwards the

Aga Khan and Boni de Castellane turned up and joined us in our corner, and the conversation between these three clever men of such different races and occupations was particularly interesting.

Gabriele d'Annunzio outstayed the other two and went on talking for another hour with the simplicity of a school boy. He explained to me the beauty of St. Francis of Assisi's soul as I had never realized it, and when we parted I felt we were friends for life. We sent a joint telegram to that effect to Clemente Origo.

Since then whenever I have met d'Annunzio this impression has never changed, and I have always been one of his staunch admirers, and not only of his literary work which is one of the glories of Italy. During the War his work as an aviator was very fine, especially when one considers his age and the fact that "flying nerve" breaks very soon in all but the extremely young. His steady pluck, cheerfulness, and wit made him the idol of all the young flying officers. I think it impossible to know d'Annunzio personally and not to like him.

During the War, in the autumn of 1915, I was returning from Calalzo in the north of Italy, where I had been to meet my husband who was in an observation post on the Alps. I thought I would try to get into Venice to spend the night, but I was very doubtful whether the authorities at the station would let me in, as it was almost impossible to enter Venice in those days. But luckily the officer in charge turned out to be my first cousin, Duke Sforza, and he gave me permission to stay three days.

Venice was marvelous in those times. I arrived in a thunderstorm, late at night; not a light was showing

anywhere—not even through a chink in the shutters of any house. The gondolier seemed to find his way by instinct. Every now and then a flash of lightning would vividly illumine the Grand Canal and its lapping gray water and reveal the marble fretwork of an old palace. Then again unfathomable velvet blackness.

At Hotel Danieli a few candles were lit in the hall and all the windows tightly shuttered and barred. It was on such stormy nights that the raids of enemy aeroplanes occurred most frequently.

Next day I wandered out into a strange Venice, empty of all but soldiers, with sandbags muffling the Palace of the Doges and Colleoni—still swaggering!—under a sort of Swiss chalet, built for his protection. The shops that sold the delicate glass of Murano were getting rid of their wares for practically nothing sooner than risk having their whole stock destroyed by bombs. The Lido was a desert, with the hotels closed, and guns placed on the roof of the Excelsior.

It was here that I met once more Gabriele d'Annunzio, now an officer, in this Venice so totally different from the one known by the gay crowd of foreigners before and after the War. We were delighted to meet so unexpectedly, and he asked me to lunch and dine with him at one of the small restaurants which were still open.

It was very curious to see the reverential respect with which the Venetian people treated him. "Il Poeta! Il Poeta!" they would murmur as we passed, and would follow us in a respectful little group as we crossed the piazza and stand gazing as we got into his gondola.

Once when we stopped to look into a shop window this silent crowd behind us grew to such dimensions that

it was quite difficult to push our way through it when we turned.

Three or four other officers, who were mutual friends of ours, joined us at the restaurant, and I have the recollection of the most charming hours that stand out in the gray blankness of those years of war. D'Annunzio's sense of humor and spontaneous gayety were most attractive, and we ended by having every meal together during my brief stay.

One night we all went out to a villa on the lagoon where the anti-aircraft guns were placed, and reveled in the beauty of the gardens by moonlight. There was only one other woman in our party, Clelia Antici-Mattei. She was tall and straight and beautiful, and d'Annunzio called her Atalanta, for he delighted in finding suitable names for all his friends.

During those gay fleeting hours he romanced: when the War was over we were all, men and women, to join in a sort of confraternity and be called the *Papussi!* He would be the Prior, and call himself Padre Fuoco, and I was to be the Abbess and be called Madre Claretia, because he said I made him think of a bright light. He found other absurd names for all our friends and declared that our Monastery was to be on the Isolino, the lovely little island on Lago Maggiore, which in those days I had rented for a term of years.

He then ran on to invent a *cri de ralliement,* which one Papusso was to utter when he met another, and after much deliberation the following chant was composed:

Oi! Oi! Oi!
Tirami la gamba più che puoi!

and we all rehearsed it together by moonlight under the cypresses and the cannons.

The cry invented by d'Annunzio for the Papussi has long been forgotten, but the other one he composed later: *Eja, eja, alatà!* has been adopted by young Italy since several years.

Of all that happened subsequently I cannot judge. It is well known how d'Annunzio and a little band of devoted adherents seized the town of Fiume and held it in the name of Italy for several months. Whether he was right or wrong, I do not know, but whatever he does he is always a poet and a very gallant man.

For several years now he has not left his house on the shores of the Lake of Garda, where he leads a strange life of his own and often receives distinguished visitors with curious military honors of his own devising.

The legend says he is not allowed to leave Garda, for his power over the crowds is too great and therefore to be feared. Fiume is not forgotten, or the spring of 1915, when from the balcony of the Capitol in Rome he lashed the crowds into a passionate desire for war.

Mussolini is too great a man and has too powerful a brain not to appreciate d'Annunzio's genius. He has visited him in his home at Garda, and spent a long day with him cruising on the lake and listening to good music, of which both men are intensely fond.

But the fact remains that Gabriele d'Annunzio never leaves the Lago di Garda.

Our last communication was about something that sounds very unromantic: bath mats!

A friend who had been one of our little group in Venice in those days came to see me in Rome last spring,

and was interested in the embroideries he found me designing. He selected two bath mats decorated with aquatic subjects: crabs, seaweed, fish, and shells, and said: "I have a great mind to take these to d'Annunzio. I am going to see him one of these days."

"Oh do!" I said, "I'd like him to have something I've designed; and tell him how I always remember him with affectionate friendship."

A few days afterwards my friend wrote:

I gave your bath mats to the Poet and he was very happy. He then sang such praises of you that they ought to be repeated with his own words, and I can't do it! But among other things he told me that Michelangelo had a great platonic love for Vittoria Colonna and that he—d'Annunzio—had the same for the living Vittoria Colonna. I think he liked the black bath mat with the frogs best of all!

And then I got a telegram:

Alvisi has brought me two little carpets as full of life as two aquariums, in which graceful memories unexpectedly unfold themselves like sea anemones. I kiss your hands with ever devoted admiration.

GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

Dario Niccodemi, the playwright, is another celebrated Italian who is also a friend of mine, and who has often come to my house; and the great Neapolitan novelist, Matilde Serao, used to visit me very frequently before the War. But 1914 created a coldness between us. She was very pro-German and during the first year of the War used all her journalistic influence for Italy to pre-

serve her neutrality and was hand-in-glove with Prince Bulow with whom she had daily mysterious conferences. Of course I was heart and soul with England and very anxious for her and Italy to join hands.

But apart from politics I had a real liking for Matilde Serao, whose picturesque flow of language was very amusing. I have never heard any one talk as much or as well as she did, and her curious appearance—she was short and enormously fat—added point to everything she said. She was a most prolific writer, turning out novel after novel until the day of her death, but at heart she was a true journalist and the work she did for the *Mattino* in Naples remains among her best achievements. She even wrote a book on deportment which, I confess, I haven't read, though after having seen her tackle a huge plateful of spaghetti I often wonder on what grounds it was written.

She married Scarfoglio, a well-known journalist, but I think both had been married before, as there is a well-known anecdote in Naples of Matilde, on hearing a noise in the courtyard, screaming out of the window:

"Scarfoglio! *your* children and *my* children are fighting *our* children!"

She spent her summer regularly at St. Moritz, where she was very friendly with the gay cosmopolitan crowd to which she was so curious a contrast. One day a literary French lady in search of lions pounced upon her and took her on the lake in a boat, where she talked poetry mincingly to her for two hours. When she landed Matilde staggered up the hillside and spotted in the distance a fellow townsman, the Duca di Terranova of Naples.

"Duca! Duca!" she shrieked, waving her parasol. *"Venga qui! Mi dica quattro porcherie!"*

Which cannot be accurately translated into English, but which must have exactly reflected her state of mind.

Dina Galli, the delightful little Italian actress, who is too little known abroad, is also a friend of mine, and I remember such a gay evening when I still lived at Palazzo Caetani and she and Amerigo Guasti, her leading man—now dead, alas, and who was such a dear!—dressed up as itinerant singers and paid us a surprise visit. Dina had sacrificed all personal vanity and disguised herself in the most absurd manner; she sang songs in a cracked voice, accompanied by Guasti's guitar and we all laughed till we cried.

But apart from these friends I have mentioned who besides their talents are *des gens du monde,* the usual Italian painter, writer, and politician is not a sociable being, or rather not *social.* The idea of "society" frightens them to death and anything which is not their usual routine is for them "society." The thought of dressing for dinner fills them with horror; the risk of meeting strange ladies to whom they will be introduced is too great to be faced.

I would stalk my quarry very gently and patiently, get them to be friendly with me and then try to lure them into my circle. Sometimes they didn't even answer my invitation to dinner—not out of rudeness, but because they thought it was unnecessary. "In a large house like yours," one said to me when gently reproved, "what difference does one place more or less make at table?"

And again, after having been pinned down to accepting, they would default with light-hearted abandon.

"Does a great lady like you ever notice whether I come or not?" was the innocent remark on being asked for an explanation.

So in utter weariness I have long ago given up trying to unite Roman society and its artistic world.

CHAPTER X

HERE AND THERE

THE early years of my married life were periodically embittered by two terrible old ladies, to whom, on my parents-in-law's instructions, I had to be extremely attentive. One was Comtesse Rzewuska, the famous Tante Thaida whom all the Caetani spoke of with bated breath. My father-in-law's mother had been Polish, a Rzewuska, and it was from her that he inherited his enormous height which in a lesser degree he transmitted to all his children. Apparently all that remained of the Rzewuska fortune was firmly gathered up in Tante Thaida's fat little hands. For years she had been a widow and spent her winters in Rome.

Long before my marriage she had lived in a house in the Piazza di Spagna, which one night was burned to the ground, and Tante Thaida barely escaped with her life. The story went that she set fire to the curtains of her bed, and did not wish to give the alarm until she was fully dressed and had her wig on; so she went into the dressing-room and rang for her maid, ordering her to begin dressing her, without any explanation. The maid who, like every one else, was very frightened of Tante Thaida, began pulling on the old lady's stockings and getting her wig out of its cardboard box without daring to ask any questions, but finally she smelt burning in the next room and opened the door to see what was the matter. The whole place was ablaze, so she fled shrieking

for help, and Tante Thaida never got her wig on in time after all, while the house was burned to the ground!

After that, she refused to make another home for herself, as all her furniture, pictures, and other valuables were destroyed, so she spent her winters in a small apartment in the Grand Hotel in Rome. But as her money bags were still intact, my people-in-law continued to call on her indefatigably, and as soon as I was engaged to be married I was taken by the Duchess to be inspected by Tante Thaida.

The old lady was extremely short and quite shapeless; she suffered from rheumatism and never left her armchair. She also had trouble with her eyes, so she wore a green shade over them and lived in semi-darkness and an incredibly stuffy atmosphere.

When I was brought to her she patted my face all over to feel my features, took off my hat to finger my hair, and even opened my mouth to examine my teeth, after which she declared I was all right. While I was much too shy to show any annoyance, I cannot imagine a modern girl submitting to all this!

When in Paris soon after our marriage my father-in-law expressed his wish that we should stay at Tante Thaida's hotel, a particularly dreadful one, and spend as much time as possible with her! His word was law, so I have a very dreary memory of my first stay in Paris as a married woman.

I always thought Tante Thaida exceptionally sharp and malicious and I am sure she saw through all the family toadying and had her tongue in her cheek all the time. She would solemnly make us all gifts of the most ex-

traordinary rubbish: imitation pearl brooches, glass beads, tin hat pins, and paper fans. I am sure it was her little joke, and that it gave her malevolent pleasure to hear us say humbly, "Merci, chère Tante Thaida, comme vous êtes bonne!" She must have been chuckling to herself all the time at the thought of the trick she was going to play on these people who were so anxious to get her money, for when she finally died she left everything she had to some obscure Polish relations, which served us all right!

The other terrible old lady was Harriet, Duchess of Sermoneta, *née* Howard de Walden. She was the third wife of the blind Duke Michelangelo, and therefore stepmother to my father-in-law.

When the blind Duke died, she quarreled fiercely with my people-in-law, and never saw them again. I could never understand who was right and who was wrong in the matter, but when I married she was always called La Duchessaccia in the Caetani family, and any one who is familiar with Italian knows how expressive a name becomes when "accia" is tacked on to it! She had a house in London and a villa in Florence and also traveled a good deal.

After we had been married a few months and were in England, a mutual friend brought us a message from La Duchessaccia. (I believe it was Mr. Hamilton Aidé.) She said she had always been very fond of my husband when he was a little boy—his grandfather died when he was twelve, and she had never seen him since—and she would like to see him again and make the acquaintance of his bride, of whom she had heard charming accounts!

So we called on Duchess Harriet who was quite civil to us but incredibly tiresome. Tante Thaide at least had pungent wit. This old lady prosed on and on, usually with her eyes shut, telling us long stories of her life, till we nearly fell asleep in our chairs. She was pretty spiteful, too, for she told us as the most natural thing in the world all the awful things she did to another old Russian lady who lived on the floor below her in Florence, and whom she didn't like. She actually pulled up some bricks in the floor and poured water into the hole, to make her believe the roof was leaking, and she got a small boy to ring the dinner bell for hours at a time to prevent her resting!

Duchess Harriet only took one meal a day, which was dinner, and when guests came to stay with her they were informed that no breakfast, luncheon, or tea was served in the house. I do not think any one was known to come twice!

She had the most wonderful necklace of several strings of huge pearls to which she added every year. They were entirely purchased with the jointure paid her reluctantly by my father-in-law, and which had been the cause of the terrible quarrel between them.

As she was very rich in her own right, she did not need this extra income, and only insisted on it as a matter of principle, and having got it, proceeded to spend it entirely on pearls. When I first knew her she had already seven rows, and patting them complacently she would say that they were a great economy, for they concealed her shabby old dresses!

We continued to see her at intervals, and she always

seemed very nice to us. One day when alone with my husband she covered her eyes bashfully with her hand and said, "Now I must tell you a long story."

The story was that she had never been able to make up her mind whom to leave her pearls to, and this caused her a good deal of worry and distress! Now that she had met him again and known me, she had finally decided.

"Vittoria will look so lovely in my pearls, I feel she must have them, and I will leave them to her in my will."

Teano kissed her hand and hastened home to tell me the joyful news. But I always felt that La Duchessaccia, like Tante Thaida, had her tongue in her cheek all the time. After all, she loathed the Caetanis, so why on earth should she leave the pearls bought spitefully with only the Caetani money back to the family she so much disliked? It would have been saintly, and the Duchessaccia was certainly not a saint.

When she died several years later, she left her collection of pearls to some English cousins, and curiously enough we were able to remember the exact date of her conversation with my husband, and it was the day before her last will was made!

In it she also stated that it had been her intention to leave a certain emerald ring to her stepdaughter Contessa Lovatelli, née Caetani, but as she had not approved of her conduct towards her father, she left her only the empty case!

The making of that will must have afforded La Duchessaccia as much enjoyment as pouring water through the floor in the Florentine house!

All my life I seem to have been constantly passing through Paris on my way to and fro, between Italy and England. As children we would join our father in Paris when the English summer was over, and autumn days drawing in. We stayed with him in the Hotel Castiglione and walked daily in the Tuileries gardens with the disagreeable governess of the moment, finding it all extremely dull. Our only joy was when our father sacrificed an occasional Sunday afternoon to us and took us to the Nouveau Cirque matinée, where for years the delightful English clown Footit and his colored companion Chocolat rejoiced us with their fooling. I think if people realized how intensely children enjoy themselves, they would give them more treats. Perhaps we had so few that we enjoyed them more than is usual, and probably now young people are more spoilt than we were.

I remember the first Nouveau Cirque pantomime I saw *Le Roi Dagobert,* and later *La Rosière de Charenton,* as hours of exquisite delight that have never been surpassed in my life. Footit and Chocolat were the most wonderful couple of mirth provokers, and kept grown-ups and children alike in roars of laughter whenever they appeared. Only quite recently during an illness in Paris I was looked after by an English trained nurse who had attended Footit in his last days. She told me that he made her quite helpless with laughter by his jokes, and she had to get him to stop so as to be able to look after him properly, so he evidently was a born clown, and a genius in his way.

Our stays in Paris never exceeded a few days, and after my marriage it was much the same thing. In the

summer I was always in a desperate hurry to get to London and grudged losing any moment of my precious stay there; in the autumn I knew it was my duty to return to Rome without delay, and so only stopped long enough to pick up necessary winter clothes.

As a matter of fact I have always "cottoned" more to English people than to French. I think there is much more similarity between English and Italian characters; they usually have the same simplicity of manner and expression, and instinctively like each other. This was very noticeable during the War when Italian and British troops were extremely friendly whenever they met, even if they could not understand a word of each other's language.

My father loved Paris and used every year to spend two months of the autumn there. I always found him settled at his favorite Hotel Castiglione whenever I passed through on my way back to Rome, and as unfortunately I was always alone he never got used to the fact that I was now grown up and independent. I remember once being bitterly disappointed at his not allowing me to accept a luncheon invitation at a restaurant with Consuelo Duchess of Manchester, because for some unknown reason he considered this invitation too flighty, though I had been married over two years, and the same year he insisted on my being escorted by Sizy when I went to spend the day at Montguichet with our old family friend, the Baronne de Laumont. I was still much too afraid of him to argue; in fact up to the end I never overcame the awe I felt for my father.

It used to amuse my husband to see me on a Sunday morning practically running all the way from Palazzo

Caetani to Palazzo Colonna, in utter terror of being late for Mass in the family chapel, for being only *just* on time was considered a delinquency by my father: one always had to be there with a few minutes to spare —a very different system from the one adopted in the happy-go-lucky Caetani establishment where regular hours did not exist.

In Paris my father lunched every day at Voisin's, and liked me to accompany him there during my brief stays. I was lighthearted in those days and loved fun, so I found lunch at Voisin's terribly dull. There were some friends of my father's who lunched there daily: the Duca di Camastra, Principe di Belmonte, Conte di San Martino, and one or two others. Each one sat alone at a little table with his back to the wall, and looked extremely serious and dignified, occasionally exchanging a few words with one another across the small room. The *menu* was always the same, as far as I can remember: an *œuf sur le plat* and a very perfectly cooked beef steak à la Châteaubriand; after which several *petits pots de crême* were presented for inspection, and according to whether one felt like custard or chocolate one chose the yellow or the brown. I believe the cellar was very fine—it probably still is!—and that is why my father and his friends, who appreciated a glass of really good wine, patronized the dignified Voisin.

In the autumn of 1903 I was in Paris when the King and Queen of Italy paid their official return visit to President Loubet, who had come to Rome in the spring. Though I was not on duty as lady-in-waiting I was invited to everything that was taking place, together with several

friends of mine who were also *Dame di Palazzo* and who happened to be in Paris too.

We were all asked to be at the Palais di Quai d'Orsay for the arrival of their Majesties, and while we were waiting we amused ourselves going through the suite of rooms that had been prepared for them, and admiring the tapestries and old furniture which for the occasion had been taken out of the Garde Meubles of the Louvre, and which was very beautiful.

When our Queen arrived on President Loubet's arm she was surprised and delighted to see us, as she did not know we were in Paris. She kissed us all round, but she was so tired from her journey that she and the King went off after a few moments to their rooms. One does not realize how little Kings and Queens are used to railroad traveling! We remained for a bit talking and laughing with the suite and the Embassy staff who were all friends of ours. We then had a series of official receptions. A huge one at the Elysée, to which I was taken by my uncle Prospero Colonna; a party given by M. Delcassé, Minister of Foreign Affairs, that was really very amusing, with an excellent theatrical performance in which Réjane, Coquelin, and other celebrities took part; another reception at the Hotel de Ville; and then the gala performance at the opera, to which we were invited by President Loubet, who placed a box at the disposal of the Italian ladies-in-waiting to the Queen.

There was quite a little group of us: Contessa Serristori who had a *parure* of the most enormous diamonds, Donna Franca Florio then in the full splendor of her exceptional beauty and always wonderfully dressed and bejeweled;

Principessa di Viggiano, *née* Princesse de Bauffremont, also very good looking and well turned out.

As the feminine official world in Paris is not very striking looking, and on these occasions French society does not show itself, the opera house though filled to overflowing, presented rather a dingy appearance, except for the box of the Italian Court ladies, on which every eye was turned. We wished to go out into the foyer during the intervals and started all together, but we were so mobbed that it was quite embarrassing. People called out loudly: *"Les dames italiennes! Les dames italiennes!"* and rushed towards us, crowding us to such an extent that we were obliged to beat a hasty retreat back to our own box.

Some one came afterwards to tell me that one of the men who had stared hardest at us was Sardou, the great dramatist, and that I had impressed him so much he wished to be presented to me: he wanted to know if he could come to call next day with a mutual friend. But I was too busy and could not fix an engagement so we never met.

Paris was very gay those nights with all the streets illuminated and beflagged, and the immense crowds, who found our Queen very handsome, sang "Viens Hélène!" to the tune of "Viens Poupoule," a popular air at that time.

The great American banker, James Stillman, with whom both my husband and I had become very friendly during the winter he had spent in Rome, was in Paris in 1906 when I arrived there.

He sent me gigantic vases of orchids that were pushed into my tiny room at the hotel with the greatest difficulty,

and lent me his motor car, which was more useful and for which I was very grateful.

He was a sad and silent man, at least so he seemed to me. He took me to see a Rembrandt and a Gainsborough he had just bought at Seligman's, and which did not seem to give him any apparent pleasure, and he told me he could not bear the Ritz, with "all those overdressed American women with pearl necklaces." I remember this as the only definite statement I ever heard him make, in fact a real *cri du cœur,* as he was always so exceedingly cautious in expressing his opinion.

He was very anxious that my husband and I should come to America, and he would have taken us all over the country in his private car and shown us everything of interest. He had mapped out the route and planned all details, but to my great disappointment my husband could not leave his father's estates for so long, as he had the management of them.

I think it was a few years later that I went to a charming party in Paris at the famous Mrs. Moore's—"La Mère Moore" as every one called her. She was a great character and entertained lavishly, talking all the time the most atrocious French, which I believe was mostly pretence, as she enjoyed making people laugh.

On that occasion there was first of all a dinner for over sixty guests, and I was told most of the places were wrong and that lots of people were very cross. But personally I found nothing the matter and enjoyed myself very much.

Afterwards Antoine Sala asked La Mère Moore why she had placed that most charming of diplomatists, Reggie Lister, who was then First Secretary, *before* a royalty, and she answered: "Oh, that's because Reggie is older

and so much more serious!" and Sala rejoined: "Well, then, when you ask me to dinner with the King of Spain, I will claim the first place for exactly the same reason!"

After dinner there was a little play in which charming Eve Lavallière took part—how many years is it now since she left the stage for the convent?—and then the platform was hurriedly torn up and the pieces hurled through the windows into the garden below, which distressed my tidy mind, but turned out an admirable plan, as dancing then took place without any delay. I found the French system of men being introduced to one extremely agreeable, for I knew very few people in the room when I arrived, but I immediately had a whole regiment of partners and danced all night. It was on that occasion that I first met Comte Boni de Castellane, now such an old friend.

At my first London balls when I did not yet know many men I was quite nervous, for no one asked to be introduced and hostesses never troubled about their guests, so unless I found at once some one I knew I ran the risk of standing about alone. I still wonder how I managed to get to know all the people I did and have so many partners, but I suppose we met at dinners and at week-end parties.

When I began to go about in London after my marriage, one of the first acquaintances I made was Lady Randolph Churchill, then Mrs. George West. She was no longer in her first youth but always most attractive, with her quick intelligence and wonderful spirits, and a genuine friendship sprang up between us which lasted until her tragic death. Only a few months before the end she had been staying with me in Rome and thor-

oughly enjoying the mixture of sightseeing and social life which is characteristic of our Eternal City.

The first year we met in London she took me to the studio of Emile Fuchs, who was then painting her portrait. She said Fuchs would be sure to want to paint me, the minute he saw me. King Edward patronized him very much, in spite of his not being English, and that year he had designed the new postage stamps that had caused a great deal of comment, besides painting the King's portrait. He was an Austrian, with a passion for talking rather poor Italian, to which he gave vent very volubly with me.

Jennie Churchill had brought with her a tall, fair and rather sad looking girl, whom she introduced as her niece; also a paper parcel which she proceeded to undo, producing a blue silk sash. This she tied round the girl's waist, announcing that she wanted to smarten her up, but the niece looked sadder than ever and the kind action fell somewhat flat. This was my first meeting with Clare Frewen, afterwards Clare Sheridan, who has told us herself how miserably shy she was in her débutante days.

After I had been in the studio a little while Fuchs drew Jennie Churchill into a corner and asked her in a whisper if she thought there was any chance of my giving him a few sittings. This was arranged before I left, and he afterwards made an oil sketch of me that was not a success, and, when he exhibited it later on without my knowledge, brought forth a storm of protests from my friends.

That same year I met Gilbert Parker and Mortimer Mempes at one of the Duchess of St. Albans' agreeable little luncheons. Mortimer Mempes asked me to visit

his studio, so the Duchess and I arranged to go there together. He had a mania for Japan and the interior of his curious house in Cadogan Gardens had been entirely imported from Tokio. He received us in a kimono, as he never dressed otherwise when at home, but as he was a very tall, stout man, with a red mustache and a very British complexion, the effect was rather comical.

He also asked at once whether he could paint me, and I gave him two or three sittings. I remember I wore a white frock and a red hat, the color of which had impressed him on my first visit, and that he begged me to wear again as he said the effect was charming. He meant to paint a finished portrait, and make me a present of the rough sketches, but not only did he not do so, but he never even allowed me to see what he was painting, so I felt I had rather wasted my time.

In those days painters and sculptors often asked me to give them sittings, and I did so willingly as I painted myself and loved the atmosphere of a studio; but curiously enough every one failed to produce a work that pleased my friends. No doubt, as the result was so general, it must have been my fault. Even Boldini, some years afterwards in Rome, made two drawings of me that no one could recognize as my portraits, and it was so discouraging that after some time I steadfastly refused to sit to any one again. I made one exception—for the sculptor Carlo Fontana in Rome, a few years before the War. He had been commissioned to execute one of the *quadrighe* that was to be placed at the top of the gigantic monument to King Victor Emmanuel. The allegorical figure that he had composed of a woman driving four horses abreast was very fine, but he was in despair over

the woman's head for which he could not find a suitable model.

Fontana was a friend of my husband's cousin Filippo Lovatelli, himself also a sculptor, and through him asked if it were possible to induce me to sit, as he thought my head symbolized everything most Roman. I felt obliged to help a Roman artist out of a difficulty, so said it would be all right and gave him an appointment. I will never forget the first sitting! Carlo Fontana presented himself in a frock coat and tall hat, escorted by Filippo Lovatelli, and after many little speeches and compliments started to work, exactly as he was, minus the hat! The clay splashed all over his coat and trousers, his cuffs got thickly plastered in it. I never saw such a mess in my life. For a little I did not like to say anything and stood on the table in the attitude he had placed me in, driving four imaginary horses and staring at a corner of the ceiling. He said he had brought Lovatelli "for the conversation," fearing I might be bored. So he made him talk incessantly and whenever the stream of words stopped for a few seconds, Fontana would edge up to him, digging his elbow sharply into his ribs and saying in a hoarse stage whisper, "Parla, parla!" I felt that if I were to give any more sittings things would have to be put on another footing, so I began by inquiring why he didn't wear an overall when working. He said he always did, but certainly couldn't when he had the honor of modeling *me!* It took quite some time to persuade him that I would not be insulted if next time he did not come in a frock coat and protected his clothes during his work. After I had been able to arrange this, I tactfully suggested that Lovatelli was not to waste his time in that way and that an

hour of silence did not bore me in the least, on the contrary, I liked the rest and the opportunity for thinking quietly for a bit.

Fontana turned out to be the only artist who made a successful likeness of me, and his clay model of my head was very good. But there were difficulties when it was finally merged into the big group. It seems that the Commission for the monument found that the head of the woman's figure was held too high, and that from down below the face could not be seen at all. Fontana was as original as usual about this. He said it was quite impossible for him to ask "Vittoria Colonna" to lower her head, and that if this was required the Commission itself would have to call in a body to request me to do so! This idea scared me, and I sent a message to say I had no feeling in the matter and that my head was to be put at any angle they thought best.

Then came the War, and I forgot all about the monument and my head until last year when I noticed that the *quadriga* had been finally placed on the top of the pile. There are two, and Fontana's is the one on the right-hand side when one faces the monument; but it is so high up that I think my most intimate friends fail to recognize me.

I have wandered some distance away from my dear friend Jennie Churchill but I must return to her in order to mention her sister, Mrs. Jack Leslie, now Lady Leslie, who is perhaps the oldest friend I have in England and whose loving welcome is always comforting whenever I return there. I met her actually when I was a girl of seventeen, on one of the very rare occasions when I was not buried in the depths of the Norfolk wilds. I had

gone to Cowes with my mother for Regatta week, and somebody took me on board Mr. Allison Armour's yacht, the *Utowana,* where I met Leonie Leslie, Lady Lister Kaye, Count Albert Mensdorff, Marquis de Soveral, and others, all of whom became very good friends of mine in later years. Leonie took a fancy to me at once, and often laughs at the recollection of the shy child that I was, trying desperately to pull on some gloves, till she whispered to me that I need not bother.

This reminds me that I *did* go to one social function in London as a girl, and that it was the first ball I ever saw. The Duchess of Sutherland, now Lady Millicent Hawes, gave one of her magnificent fêtes at Stafford House, and my grandmother who had been invited and who was an old friend of the family, asked if she could bring her Roman granddaughters, for she wanted us to see the beautiful house. I believe I was only fifteen at the time.

We girls wore white tulle, with red poppies in our hair, and stood all the evening close to our grandmother's chair. She was impressive, draped all in black veils spangled with gold, and she found all her old cronies and had a very good time, but we knew no one, so watched rather sadly all the people who looked as if they were enjoying themselves so much, and thought how lovely it would be to know some one to dance and go down to supper with. The Duchess looked too lovely with her immense tiara and many jewels, and though my grandmother disapproved of the very modern way her hair was done, all puffed out over a frame (like a Japanese, she said), we girls thought it perfection and resolved to try to copy her style the minute we got back.

Stafford House was a very lovely home and it is sad to

feel it will no longer be seen as a private house. This reminds me of a funny joke that was made at the time the Duke of Sutherland gave it up. A girl we all knew was a most awful snob and it was said that she had been through a dreadful experience that nearly killed her: she managed to get into Stafford House at last by crawling up a drainpipe and through a window, and had then found out that it was turned into a Museum!

To Leonie Leslie I owe many pleasant hours and days in London. It was in her house that I first met the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, always such kind friends to me. During my first two or three seasons in London my grandmother used to insist on my not going to balls alone, though I failed to see why this was more dangerous than going about my myself all day long; but as long as I stayed in her house I tried to comply with her wishes. So I often went to parties with Leonie Leslie, and we had charming times together. Another very kind chaperon of my early days in London was the Duchess of St. Albans, one of the most attractive elderly ladies I have ever met. She took me about with her a great deal, and she knew all the interesting people. I remember calling with her on Lady Rothschild in her beautiful house in Piccadilly, and enjoying being shown Lord Rothschild's collection of works of art. She also took me to Lady Iveagh's, where I saw the wonderful pictures that Lord Iveagh eventually left to the nation, and are now at Ken Wood. I also had pleasant evenings at Covent Garden with the Duchess of St. Albans, and heard Calvé in *Carmen* and Melba in *La Bohême*.

CHAPTER XI

ROMAN GAIETIES

EVERY year, about the middle of November, I returned to Rome where my husband had already preceded me as we rarely traveled together, and took up my abode on the second floor of Palazzo Caetani for the whole winter. This program never varied from the year I married until soon after the death of my father-in-law in 1918. I always hated Palazzo Caetani with its gloom and dirt, and all the discomfort I had to put up with helped to embitter the best years of my life. It is sad to think of the countless marriages in Italy that have turned out badly and unhappily owing to the old-fashioned custom of young wives having to live with their parents-in-law. My husband and I were very fond of each other, and could have been so happy in a home of our own, but he was dominated by his father and mother and never dared to break away, though he saw how miserable they made me. The Duke and Duchess never forgave me for not being the American heiress they had hoped for as daughter-in-law, who would have brought more gold into the family coffers and been suitably impressed by the family history. I had very little money, and, as a Colonna, was not at all awed by the Caetanis!

I suppose when a family feud has gone on for so many centuries, it really gets into one's blood. The Caetani Pope, Boniface VIII, was struck in the face and dragged off his throne by Sciarra Colonna, on September 7, 1303,

at Anagni, and a few days later died of a broken heart.

Whenever I had received more than my daily share of snubs and pinpricks I used to shut myself up in my room and sit with my face in my hands, saying to myself over and over again, "Never mind, Sciarra slapped Boniface!" And after some time I was quite cheered up again.

When my husband's second brother, Roffredo, married an American heiress, I was made to feel by the old people that he at least had done the right thing, and every sort of hint on the subject became my daily bread. But the American heiress was not so long-suffering as I was, in spite of the favors she enjoyed, and after two years Palazzo Caetani knew her no more. With the determination characteristic of her race she compelled her husband to follow her and they now spend their lives between Versailles and Deauville!

Happily I had high spirits in my youth, which rose quickly after the severest rebuffs, and in spite of a good many troubles and tears shed in the privacy of my room, I managed to lead an interesting and agreeable life, and sometimes even to be happy.

People often ask me whether Roman society has changed during these last years. I really don't think I see much difference. Of course some people have vanished and some houses are closed, but then new hostesses have appeared and another generation has sprung up, and it seems to me that life continues on very much the same lines as before. The diplomatic corps was more prominent socially before the War; the disappearance of the two Austrian Embassies has certainly made a gap, and the type of agreeable young secretary or attaché of various

nationalities, which used to be a great resource for hostesses, is now as extinct as the Dodo.

I remember when Maurice Baring was Secretary in Rome, busy accumulating all the material which he used for *Cat's Cradle* and other delightful novels in after years, and charming us all by his agreeable conversation and ready wit. Reggie Lister was also the perfect type of worldly diplomatist, cultivated and amusing, and later on his nephew, Charles Lister, son of Lord Ribblesdale, was a great favorite with every one in Rome. He was one of the many brilliant youths fated to die in the Great War. Lord Lascelles was also at the Embassy for two or three years, and was a great friend of us all.

He was one of the first to teach me bridge, as I wanted to be amused when I was convalescing from my bad riding accident. I am always grateful to him for his patience, as this best of card games has proved such a solace to me in after life.

The British Embassy has always been a great feature in Rome, and ever since I can remember I seem to have been the link connecting it with the real Romans. What a long succession of ambassadors and their charming wives I have seen in that hospitable abode in Via Venti Settembre, with its beautiful gardens and shady ilex groves!

When I was a little girl I went to children's parties there given by Lord and Lady Vivian, and was great friends with their twin daughters, Violet and Doris. The latter eventually married the famous general who commanded the British forces during the War, and is now Lady Haig.

The next Ambassador was a bachelor, Sir Clare Ford, and he did not entertain us children as far as I re-

member. When I first grew up, Lord and Lady Currie reigned at the British Embassy and were particularly kind and affectionate to me. She wrote charmingly under the name of Violet Fane, and had a passion for bric-à-brac and Pekinese dogs, while he was very handsome and distinguished looking.

Sir Edwin and Lady Egerton followed, and were all kindness and hospitality. She was a Russian and very much attached to her own people, so in those days there were almost as many Russians as English at the Embassy parties, and a lot of good music, as Lady Egerton was very musical.

Lord Bertie and Lady Feo Bertie came next, and cards became the principal pastime at the British Embassy, as Lady Feo loved bridge and poker. Sir Rennell and Lady Rodd, who succeeded the Berties, were already old friends of ours, as Sir Rennell had been in Rome several years before as First Secretary. They received indefatigably, and among other entertainments gave a large fancy dress ball in 1912 which was the feature of that particular season. Fancy dress was obligatory for all the guests, who on arrival took their places on raised seats round the ballroom, while carefully prepared groups of various periods made effective entrances, welcomed by the Ambassador in the costume of Sir Walter Raleigh.

With the splendid pluck that has made England the country she is, Lady Rodd decreed that the whole staff of the British Embassy should represent the various Gods of Olympus, while she should be Juno herself throning in their midst. Her group was the first to enter the ballroom, amidst the awe of the assembled guests, and they took their place on a raised platform at the end of the

room from which they acknowledged the homages of the other groups that followed, and surveyed the proceedings. A lighter note was struck by the entrance of some woodland nymphs, the lovely daughters of Marquis d'Alcedo, who were chased by a prancing Satyr complete with horns and tail and gray fur, an effective disguise which hid Gerald Tyrwhitt, then attaché at the Embassy, and now Lord Berners, the well-known composer.

There was a most striking Milanese group, representing Gian Galeazzo and Beatrice Sforza and their suite. The rôle of Galeazzo was taken by the present Duke Sforza, and many of the components of the group represented some ancestor of their own, and wore magnificent costumes copied from family portraits. It was interesting to note how the present Italian type lends itself to the dresses of the Renaissance period, and men who usually seemed insignificant in modern clothes assumed real dignity and character in the costumes of their ancestors. My sister, Marchesa Chigi, who as a Colonna and a Chigi had nothing to do with Milan, took part in the group all the same for the sake of being with some intimate friends, and looked lovely as Bianca Sforza.

There were some exquisite costumes in an eighteenth century group, as Conte Mazzarino lent some authentic dresses of the period that are preserved in his palace at Palermo, and that are real gems of old brocade and fine embroidery. To a lover of beautiful things it was a real anxiety to see those almost unique relics of another century, which ought to have been in a glass case in a museum, worn by careless young people who danced all night!

Perhaps the most interesting group from the historical

point of view was mine, as I represented my ancestress, Vittoria Colonna. Caramba, the great costumer of Milan, designed my dress, which was not copied with absolute faithfulness from her one authentic portrait in the Colonna gallery, as I must confess I don't admire it very much. I chose to represent Vittoria Colonna when already widowed and saddened by life, in flowing black velvet draperies and close gold cap, and I entered the ballroom with downcast eyes fixed on an open volume carried in my hands. I was followed by a wonderful group of men, in which the whole history of the Roman Renaissance was recalled. Leone, Gelasio, and Michelangelo Caetani, Prospero Colonna with his two sons, Piero and Fabrizio, Domenico Orsini, each one representing some special ancestor and looking as though they had stepped out of their frames in the family picture gallery. I particularly wished to have art and literature prominently represented in my following, so Conte Giuseppe Primoli, with his gray beard, made an admirable Baldassare Castiglione, and Aristide Sartorio, Antonio Palmieri, Giuseppe Vitelleschi, Filippo Lovatelli and others each represented some contemporary artist of the Renaissance period. No one, however, felt equal to being Michelangelo, so only his spirit followed in my wake!

There was also the Persian group that later on became the inevitable accompaniment to every fancy dress ball, but which in those days was not yet hackneyed. Some very lovely women took part in it, among others Princesse Abba Radziwill (the beautiful Dorothy Deacon), Donna Franca Florio, Marchesa di Rudini, Princesse Dolly Radziwill, Donna Vivina Sangro, Principessa di Castagneta, Miss Frances Clarke, Donna Maria Mazzoleni and Con-

tessa Elisabetta Revedin, while among the men were Principe Potenziani, lately Governor of Rome, Principe di Scordia and Barone Giuseppe Compagna.

Prince Lichtenstein of the Austrian Embassy, who was one of the best looking men I have ever seen, looked splendid as the central figure in the Persian group, and he welcomed and drew into their midst the Marchesa Luisa Casati, now celebrated for her originality throughout the world, who made an entrée all by herself, in a marvelous costume of gold tissue and feathers, and was escorted by negroes, monkeys, peacocks, and greyhounds.

There had not been a *serious* fancy dress ball in Rome ever since I could remember, so the Rodd one, which was a real success, afforded food for conversation for many days.

There were also occasional theatricals at the British Embassy during the Rodd period, and I remember a play with Cleopatra as the title rôle, written by Lady Rodd herself, which she wished me to undertake. But I felt it was utterly beyond my histrionic powers and beat a hurried retreat, so Lady Rodd, undaunted, undertook the part herself and interpreted her work with an *aplomb* that I could never have achieved.

When the War and consequently sadder days came, Lady Rodd put the same indomitable energy she exercised in social functions into the organizing of various charities. The shop of every variety of articles she started in Piazza di Spagna and later transplanted to the Embassy itself, did a roaring trade. She attended personally to every detail and handed over a considerable sum to the fund for wounded soldiers.

To continue the history of the British Embassy in Rome as I remember it: The Rodds were succeeded by

Sir George and Lady Georgina Buchanan, who were also great friends of mine as they had been in Rome before when Sir George was secretary. They came to Rome straight from Russia, where they had been during the War, and at the beginning of all the Bolshevik troubles, and were both worn out and exhausted after the difficult times they had been through. Lady Georgina was already suffering from the terrible illness that eventually carried her off a few years later. I think no one in Rome realized with what heroism she endured intense pain day and night until she finally had to give in and submit to a dangerous operation. She never complained to any one, and went on her way accomplishing serenely all her duties as ambassadress and hostess.

Sir George himself, with a broken voice, told me how he came into her room one morning and found her sobbing with her head on the dressing table. "I can't bear it any more," was all she said. "Please send for the doctor."

A few weeks after the operation, as soon as she had gathered just sufficient strength to stand, she pulled herself together, had her hair waved, and dressed herself and resumed her official duties with a brave smile. Sir George had a hard time all round, as the "mauvaises langues" accused him of having encouraged the Bolshevik revolution while he was in Russia, and people in Rome were rather stiff with him in consequence, hinting that he would like to foment a revolution also in our country. But he refuted all calumnies and explained all his actions in the book of memoirs he afterwards published.

To come down to quite modern times, Sir George Buchanan was succeeded by Sir Ronald Graham who, as

I write, is still representing his Britannic Majesty in Rome. I number him and his wife, Lady Sybil, among my most intimate friends, after six years of almost daily contact during the months I spent in Rome. Their friendship has the rare quality of unswerving loyalty, which can always be relied on in any circumstance and in which one can put all one's trust.

Sir Ronald is on terms of personal friendship with Signor Mussolini, who has a great regard for his sound common sense, and enjoys his frequent visits to Palazzo Chigi. My opinion may be considered prejudiced, but I think every one who has been to Rome will agree that never has England been more ably or more charmingly represented there than it is at the present moment.

To return to the years in Rome before the War, I remember the Egyptian ball given by Baronessa Nathalie Blanc in her beautiful apartment in the Palazzo Ruspoli the year after Lady Rodd's ball, and which was by far the most effective entertainment of the sort I have ever seen in any country. It required months of study on the part of Baronessa Nathalie's daughter-in-law, Maria Blanc, to prepare every detail, but her labors were finally rewarded by a really unique spectacle.

The ballroom of Palazzo Ruspoli is a very large hall decorated with seventeenth century frescoes in the effective Roman style, but she had placed tall palm trees all round the walls so that the paintings only showed through them as a soft blur of color. There are many windows on both sides of the hall, and in each one was placed a high pedestal decorated with hieroglyphics, on which sat an Egyptian idol. These were privileged guests who were not taking part in any of the special groups, and who

wished to have a good view of the proceedings. The appearance of some of them was quite remarkable, as they sat in stiff Egyptian attitudes. I remember Vivina Mazzarino, later on Duchessa di Sangro, laden with all the priceless jewels of the Mazzarino family, and Conte Enea Silvio Piccolomini, entirely covered with red paint.

At the end of the hall, raised on a stage, was the Sphynx outlined against a moonlit sky. Baronessa Maria Blanc sat on a throne between the Sphynx's paws, with oriental perfumes burning on a platter before her, from which spirals of gray smoke ascended and veiled her mysteriously.

Of course Egyptian dress was obligatory for all the guests besides which the most elaborate groups were organized that made special *entrées*. Principessa di Castagneta, who died so tragically not long ago in the fullness of her youth and beauty, represented Salambô, an unforgettable vision of blonde loveliness, in the midst of a group of other beautiful women.

Rameses arrived on his painted chariot drawn by his slaves, a striking figure of gold, and only later recognized as Principe Francesco Rospigliosi.

Baronessa Blanc asked me to represent Cleopatra. I was carried in on a litter, borne shoulder high by black slaves draped in leopard skins, and was surrounded by a court of fair women and brave men. Among them were Beatrice Marconi, Senator Marconi's first wife; the ever lovely "Pussie" Aliotti, and Miss Elsie Boulter, who afterwards became Marchesa Calabrini. Lord Berners, who besides his other gifts has a real talent for fancy dress, was my Court magician, marvelous in bright red with the most fantastic headgear; and Barone Giuseppe

Compagna, all in black and gold, was my cup-bearer. The two copper-colored slaves who opened our procession were Archie Clark-Kerr, then secretary at the British Embassy, and Horace de Pourtalès. I had about a dozen warriors following my litter, all young and good looking, some of whom were fated to fall in the Great War not long afterwards, alas!

The litter was lowered in the middle of the hall and I was assisted out of it, after which we acted a little scene. The Magician handed me a pearl which was dropped in the goblet presented by the cup-bearer; I had to drink it, but somehow Antony was not there! Instead the Goddess of Love, Principessa Potenziani, very graceful in white with her long golden hair falling over her shoulders, appeared and presented me with a lotus flower; hand in hand we made obeisance to the Sphynx and took our places on the steps of the throne near our hostess. I really don't know what it was all about, but the audience was kindly disposed and most uncritical, so we were applauded!

At that time Tut-ank-amen was still sleeping undisturbed and forgotten in his golden sarcophagus, otherwise he would have had a wonderful procession all to himself, and been the success of the party!

It was very noticeable how much more becoming Egyptian dress was to the women than to the men, for among the latter there were a good many very sorry sights, especially when, after the entrance of the various groups, dancing became general. There was a cotillon with a profusion of Egyptian favors, a supper that lasted until the small hours of the morning, and altogether it was a most wonderful ball.

My father, who was an excellent amateur, had acted constantly with the great Adelaide Ristori in the days of his youth, and on the strength of this there was a vague feeling in the family that I, too, should have talent in that direction. If it exists it has been hidden during all these years, for I have had very few occasions of displaying it.

When I was twelve years old I took the part of the Wicked Fairy in the pantomime of *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood,* which was given at Contessa Taverna's house. This fact is only worthy of note because the great Ristori herself, then a very old woman, came to one of the rehearsals and for love of my father led me into one of the smaller drawing-rooms and coached me in my part. Her tragic gestures were very impressive and I imitated them as best I could, monkey fashion, with the result that my performance was considered remarkable for a child of my age! Adelaide Ristori was kindness herself on this occasion. She opened all the cupboards and chests containing her theatrical wardrobe that had been locked up for so many years, and loaded me with lots of the jewelry that had adorned her so often in the days of her triumphs.

After this youthful beginning my stage career was confined to dancing occasionally in ballets at various charity performances! Only once I took part in a serious play, a few years after my marriage. It was *Gli Innamorati* of Goldoni, the eighteenth century playwright, and of course it was acted in Italian. I was given the title rôle, with Giorgio Guglielmi as the *jeune premier.* He is now a serious political man, but in those days he was very gay and acted well, and we got a lot of fun out of the rehearsals. However, I doubt whether the public enjoyed

it as much as we did! As a matter of fact, there has never been but one good amateur actor or actress in Rome ever since I can remember, and that is Principessa Paternò, a Sicilian by birth. I saw her act several times a good many years ago, and she had real talent that completely transformed her when she was on the stage. She became coquettish, radiant, tragic, according to the part she was representing, and Duse, who admired her very much, always said that if Princess Paternò had been obliged to work for her living she would have been the first actress in Italy. She was admirable in the part of Mirandolina in the *Locandiera* of Goldoni, which had been one of Duse's favorite rôles in her youth. But there was no one worthy of acting with her, and therefore serious amateur theatricals have never existed in Rome in my generation.

In reviewing the story of Rome in the last twenty-five years it is impossible not to pause before a figure that stands out prominently among all the others in its social world, that of "Jane," as she is familiarly called by every one who is some one all over Europe and America.

It is many years ago since Jane Campbell first came to Rome, an unknown American girl traveling with her mother, and spent the winter in a quiet hotel. She came and conquered. I first met her at my sister's coming-out ball at Palazzo Colonna, where she was brought by my uncle Fabrizio Colonna, who had asked for an invitation for her, as he was one of her first admirers in Rome. I can see her now, with a head of wavy red hair, and a pink satin frock embroidered with butterflies. But the only admirer she paid serious attention to was Carlo

Bourbon del Monte, Principe di San Faustino, and after a somewhat tempestuous engagement they were married and lived in Palazzo Barberini, which is still Jane's home. It has been a social center, I might say almost a club, for all these years. Jane's hospitality is boundless, but apart from entertaining, she has always loved to have people drop in on her, all day long, and every day. She collects human beings as others collect postage stamps or moths. She is genuinely interested in them and wants to know everything that concerns her friends. When she has learned all she wanted, she talks about it with light-hearted freedom, and as there is no detail of her private life or the workings of her own soul which she minds discussing quite openly over the bridge table, she can never imagine that any one else minds being talked about either. This often leads to complications. When a *fracas* occurs, Jane is the first to blame herself. She criticizes her own conduct so utterly and completely that there is nothing left for any one else to say, as her severity far exceeds that of the offended party. Her consequent repentance is so disarming that the only thing left to do is to forgive and forget and start again all square. Everything having quieted down, she exclaims indignantly: "When people are afraid of giving their opinion they just say: *Jane said so!*"

We have been intimate friends ever since her marriage, when I was still a girl. I don't think any one else has ever amused me as much as Jane. Her sense of humor is so unfailing, her vocabulary so extensive and her wit so ready. I once asked Dario Niccodemi, the well-known Italian playwright, who was a great friend of ours, why he didn't put her into one of his plays.

"It's because I've tried and failed!" he answered. "Everything she says is so unexpected that it is impossible to invent the things she *might* say. I had to give it up in despair!"

Some of her *bon mots* have become proverbial in Rome and have occasionally nettled those to whom they were addressed. It is a pity that they are nearly all unrepeatable, in consequence! Her passion for bridge affords splendid opportunities for criticism among the unhappy mortals who do not care for cards, and are therefore deprived of all the delightful intimacy of a cosy little dinner followed by a few rubbers of bridge, played near a wood fire on a winter's evening!

Her love of cards has sometimes led Jane into forming unfortunate acquaintances for the sake of collecting good players around her, and several of those who used to frequent Palazzo Barberini assiduously at bridge time got involved in various scrapes and were obliged to vanish from our sight. Jane refers to her "Rogues' Gallery," as she calls it, with loyal affection for each individual in it, remembering their endearing qualities and always adding: "Anyway, I was awfully fond of him!"

Her large dinner parties are always very successful. They take place in a beautiful hall decorated with frescoes, with a splashing fountain on one side and a row of tall columns on the other. A magnificent yellow and blue macaw surveys proceedings from his perch placed against the background of an old tapestry, while the guests are placed at one, two, or three refectory tables of old oak. Jane invariably finds out who is "the latest coon in town," and every foreigner of note of any nationality who is passing through Rome never fails to get an invitation to

one of her banquets. She has also a real genius for unearthing quiet, respectable families who have been hidden in crevices for a very long time, and mixing them up with the gay smart set, to the great improvement of their spirits. As she never by any chance gets a name right, even an Anglo-Saxon one, it is always a mystery how she makes up her lists of guests for a ball, but every one is there and comes every time, dancing, blowing trumpets, bursting balloons, and playing bridge in odd corners. Old gentlemen, who otherwise have not left the sacred precincts of the Caccia Club for the last thirty years, sit about all night watching proceedings with a benign smile, and every one generally has a very good time.

The years roll on, and Princess Jane, now a widow, is a striking figure with her snow-white hair, Mary Stuart bonnet and flowing black veils that she has adopted almost as a uniform. But her mode of life and her spirits have always remained the same. The only trouble is that we are all getting a bit too old for her. She frankly only likes young people, preferably the extremely young. This obliges her friends to "hustle" so as not to be left behind, which I suppose is very good for us and keeps us all alive.

But there is another Jane hidden away behind the one we know in the ballroom and at the card table, and this is maybe the secret of our long friendship—a Jane who is full of common sense and warm sympathy, and has a loving heart. I remember at the time of the Messina earthquake when for a hectic forty-eight hours I was getting ready to sail on the hospital ship, she was the friend who did most to help me, in the quickest and most practical way. When late on that cold winter night I

got to the station and found the train that was to take me to Spezia, there was Jane on the platform, with all her wooden cases neatly painted with Red Crosses, and full of comforts for the wounded and homeless, having them shoveled into the van by her butler, seeing that nothing was forgotten and helping me to the last with her cheery good-by. "Bully for you, Vittoria . . . good luck!"

During the War she ran a soup kitchen for the poor in Rome which was excellently organized and much praised by the authorities. Since then she has given all her energies to a school for poor children whom she has taken under her protection, and for which she has collected an incredibly large sum with the various charity entertainments she gets up twice a year, in Rome and in Venice. She visits the school daily and attends to every detail herself, doing a little amicable bullying all round, chaffing the mistresses and being friends with all the children. These are chosen from among the most delicate in the poorest families of Rome, and with good food, sun baths and a healthy régime many poor mites who would have gone under in the battle of life are saved. And were it only for this, and not for many other endearing qualities as well, let us cheer our one and only Jane, Principessa di San Faustino.

CHAPTER XII

A FEW HOBBIES

EVER since I can remember I have always loved holding a pencil and dabbling in paints. My English grandmother, who had inherited the talent of the Lockes, was my first teacher, and painted up to the last years of her life. She had a great facility and a pretty taste, though it was not the fashion in her day for women to work seriously in studios and to study anatomy. I spent many happy mornings as a child at Merton at a little table with my paint box, carefully copying some task she had given me, while Nonna, as I always called her, worked at an easel nearby.

When I was a little older I longed for real teaching, but art did not enter into my father's program of education for girls, and he looked on my wish with suspicion. He finally consented to my sister and myself having painting lessons at the Convent of the Assumption in Rome, where we went for other classes. A darling little English nun, Mère Agnès de la Compassion, taught me to paint on parchment in the style of the old missals, with an array of tiny brushes and saucers and dainty shells of gold paint. I learned Gothic lettering and received a good deal of practical advice on life and the best way of avoiding temptation from Mère Agnès, but it was not the sort of painting I wanted to learn.

Later on, when I was about sixteen, we met a water-color painter called Domenico Pennacchini, who was a

cousin of my mandolin teacher, and my father allowed my sister and myself to have lessons from him. I continued working with dear Pennacchini until some years after my marriage, and whatever I know about water-color painting I learned from him. We had many pleasant times together, sketching in the old villas of Rome and in the Campagna, and sometimes working at his studio. He was very stout, and the kindest-hearted of men, devoted to dogs and flowers, and painted water colors of peasant girls with bunches of flowers and Roman matrons in classical draperies seated on marble benches that are to be found in the shops of Piazza di Spagna, and which are bought by the passing tourist. Poor Pennacchini, who had gained an honorable and comfortable existence for many years, was one of the victims of the War, for in those days when no travelers came to Rome any more, his poor little pictures remained unsold, so he went to the Campo Verano cemetery one sad evening, and after wandering a long time among the graves under the tall cypresses, finally shot himself through the head with his revolver.

But I suppose my painting was mostly self-taught, for I worked extremely hard for a good many years; in fact, social life was a recreation that I allowed myself only at certain seasons. I painted indefatigably wherever I happened to be, and often went to stay in some new place because of the subjects I could find there.

I did a certain amount of work in Egypt when I was there with Sir Ernest Cassel, who was very kind in providing me with a dragoman and a donkey for my sketching expeditions whenever we stopped at some interesting place on our journey up the Nile. One day at Kom Ombo

I was overtaken by a sand storm when hard at work and I was so anxious to finish my picture that I worked on and on, blinking and coughing till my paints got so mixed with sand that I was absolutely obliged to stop, rather to the dragoman's relief. Curiously enough, that sketch proved one of my best.

I was very anxious to paint in the grounds of Haddon Hall, which in those days was uninhabited by the Manners family, so I stayed for a fortnight in the summer of 1908 at the Peacock Inn, Rowsley, and hired a funny sort of horse and cart with which I drove over to Haddon daily. It was a delightful time, painting all day long in the open air amidst beautiful surroundings and in perfect weather, and I did a lot of work.

Italy of course was an inexhaustible mine of subjects. I worked a great deal in Tuscany at my sister Marchesa Chigi's country places, Cetinale and Vico Bello. I stayed with Duca and Duchessa Lante at their beautiful villa Bagnaia near Viterbo which is an artist's dream; Venice and Florence I stayed in for some weeks on purpose to paint and of course during the long months in Rome I always found plenty to do.

I also spent some time at Villa d'Este on the Lago di Como when it was not the fashionable resort it is now, and chartered a rowboat in which I went painting along the coast every day and all day.

Talking of Villa d'Este, I remember that when I was there a flutter was caused by the arrival of a rich Jewish lady from London with her two daughters who proceeded immediately to give a ball. It was much like any other hotel ball until the cotillion, when the hostess invented what she considered a charmingly original figure.

A couple were led into the middle of the room and made to kneel down and before they could realize what was happening a veil and orange blossom wreath was thrown over the girl, lighted candles produced on both sides and the band struck up Mendelssohn's Wedding March! This parody shocked people so much that many left the party.

I recall also very happy days in Scotland, staying at Balcarres with my husband's aunt, Lady Crawford, who was all kindness to us, and whom we visited regularly every year. Her daughter-in-law, Lady Balcarres, now Lady Crawford herself, and I had a good many tastes in common and were very intimate. We used to paint in the gardens and fields most of the day and be always very happy together.

The one place where I found painting quite impossible was Norway. My husband and I, two years after our marriage, had gone for a "pleasure cruise" on the *Ophir* up the Norwegian coast to the North Cape, and then across to Spitzbergen, which in those days was No Man's Land, and the Polar Ice Pack—as far North in fact as it is possible to go by ship without being an explorer. We both enjoyed the voyage very much, and liked our trips in Norway so that we decided to return there another summer and spend some weeks there. So a few years later we went to a little place called Norheimsund on the Hardanger Fjord, and though the weather was wonderful and the scenery apparently charming, it was quite impossible to paint there. Daily I wandered out with all my paraphernalia but the emerald green grass and stiff little fir trees were maddening from an artist's point of view, and there was simply nothing else to paint. So

Norway proved a great disappointment as far as sketching was concerned.

I arranged to have a show of my water colors at the Leicester Gallery in Piccadilly in 1909, and for a long time before that I worked as hard as I could to get the required number of sketches ready. When my show came off I was paralyzed at my audacity in having ever dared to contemplate such an undertaking but it succeeded far beyond my expectations. It was visited by the King who made several purchases, and the attendance was very large, so that practically all the pictures were sold. It seems odd that after that small success I gave up water-color painting! But the explanation was that it fired my imagination to do more serious work and bigger things.

I met a French artist in Rome the following winter, who had a studio in Via Rasella and took in a limited number of pupils for a life class. He had real talent and taught extremely well, and under his guidance I threw away my water colors and started from the bottom of the ladder, working very hard at pure drawing and studying anatomy, perspective, and composition. For five years I worked at Noel's studio all the morning long for six months of the year. I loved the class and my fellow students, with all of whom I was on excellent terms. A few of them write to me still from their distant homes—one in North Carolina and another in Brazil—and recall wistfully the good old days in Via Rasella, when in the intervals of work we walked about the street in our aprons.

When Noel and I parted in June, 1914, we were full of plans for the work I was then to do. My grounding seemed sufficiently solid now for me to start on more

attractive things, and reap the benefit of these years of toil.

Then the War came, and he went back to his own country to fight. News came that he was doing very well, enjoying the life and employing his spare moments in drawing portraits of his *camarades* who admired him enormously. In September, 1914, Noel was killed on the French front, and since then, somehow, I have never touched a paint brush.

On looking back ballooning seems a foolish sort of hobby to have had, leading to nothing and extremely dangerous.

To use my favorite expression, wild horses on their bended knees would not be able to induce me to enter a balloon nowadays. But one must reflect that then, in 1906, the Wright brothers and Santos Dumont were still struggling with their inventions, and for practical purposes aeroplanes did not yet exist. The fascination of leaving Mother Earth for a few hours has always been very great, and balloons opened a new world to me. For some time I had wanted to try this new sensation, and I was to have made my first ascent from Rome, but fate seemed against me. Once the balloon burst when they were inflating it for my trip, and the second time a strong wind was blowing and the balloon when ready for the ascent was pushed sideways by a sudden gust on to some palings, which ripped its side open. This *contretemps* was very lucky and possibly saved my life, as Italy is not geographically suitable for balloon ascents, being very narrow and surrounded by the sea on three sides, but I was disappointed.

When soon afterwards I went to London, I made the acquaintance of Lord Royston, now Lord Hardwicke, and he said he would arrange an ascent for me. I was introduced to a small set of balloonists, the Charlie Rolls of Rolls-Royce fame, Mr. Frank Butler, the well-known wine merchant, Mr. Perrin, who was secretary of the Aero Club, Mr. and Miss Moore-Brabazon, and Mr. C. F. Pollock, who had already crossed the Channel three times in a balloon.

We all felt very enterprising and modern and talked about safety valves and ballast and other technical matters and really thought the future of the world pointed that way. People called us "the Balloonatics," but after all we were not so very far wrong; the balloon was our Covered Wagon, and later on it was followed by the aeroplane, as the automobile now travels on the prairies of the West.

During that summer I made several ascents, usually with Mr. Butler or Mr. Rolls as pilot, and the risks I ran and the adventures I experienced were very much exaggerated by gossip and the daily press. I achieved an unexpected notoriety as "the ballooning Princess," and submitted to a good deal of rebuke from King Edward, who thought my craze a foolish one and was annoyed because I wouldn't give it up.

I had been able to persuade my grandmother that it was an easy way of taking an airing! Very few people, and practically only two women—Mrs. Assheton Harbord and myself—did any ballooning, though the public was beginning to turn its attention skywards and wonder whether this new aero movement would come to anything.

I find this cutting from the *Morning Post* among my papers:

BALLOON "DERBY"
AERIAL RACE FROM RANELAGH

Yesterday's balloon race from Ranelagh signalized a culminating achievement to years of effort on the part of the pioneers of the aerial movement in England. It was the first competition of the kind ever held in this country. Never before had seven balloons ascended from one spot, and the enthusiasts of the Aero Club who held a reunion at the Florence Restaurant after the competitors had returned triumphantly to Liverpool Street, regarded the event as marking an epoch in the history of aeronautics.

Considering the fitful nature of the wind, the race was brought to a satisfactory conclusion, although the winning balloon, "Dolce far Niente," guided by Mr. Frank Butler, perhaps the most experienced aeronaut engaged in the contest, descended 9½ miles from Ingatestone, the hamlet selected as the winning point. All the seven balloons descended safely in the Ossett, Stanford-le-Hope and Grays districts early last night. To Mr. Frank Butler will be awarded the 50-guinea cup presented as first prize by the *Evening News*.

Outside Ranelagh the aerial race was followed by thousands of interested Londoners. From the Embankment the aircraft could be seen placidly floating ahead. Every head upon the outside seats of tramway cars south of the Thames was craned upwards in the endeavor to calculate the distances between the competitors. Probably the passenger in whom most interest was taken was the Princess Teano, the grand-daughter of Lady Walsingham. She accompanied Viscount Royston and Mr. Pollock in

the Club balloon which led the line of competitors. Dressed simply in a pale blue holland gown and a Leghorn hat, the Princess arrived at Ranelagh about a quarter to four, and smiled calmly at the suggestion that she was acting heroically. At the end she told one of the party that she had thoroughly enjoyed the trip.

The balloons floated away smoothly on the south-westerly wind, and at half-past four had disappeared from the ken of the Ranelagh assembly. The seven balloons kept in sight of each other the whole way, but the wind blew in varied currents, and some of the craft descended a long way apart. Mr. Leslie Bucknell, in the "Enchantress," came down on top of an elm tree three miles outside Grays. One balloon crossed the Thames five times, another just grazed some telegraph wires, but there were no real mishaps. Hundreds of villagers, surprised at the coming of the balloons, turned out to view the unusual spectacle.

A little later on, during the same season of 1908, Mrs. Harbord and I decided to make a night ascent, which was considered quite a daring feat, for no woman had yet attempted it. Mr. Frank Butler consented to be our pilot, and Lord Royston accompanied us.

I remember dining alone with my grandmother in the old house in Eaton Square, both of us in tea-gowns, and knitting quietly afterwards in the mellow lamplight. When bedtime came I escorted her to her rooms and kissed her good-night, and then I flew to mine and changed into a tweed coat and skirt. I slipped out of the house and picked up a cab, and joined my balloonatics at a little Italian restaurant we frequented in those days, and where we partook gayly of an excellent supper.

At midnight we all drove to Wandsworth Gas Works. There was a Miss Granville who was also going to make an ascent at the same time as ourselves in another balloon; I cannot remember who her pilot was, but he agreed to race us. We found the two balloons already inflated and waiting for us, looming up in the darkness like gigantic gray ghosts. Our start was rather exciting as the wind drove us sideways perilously near the roof of a house, and the men had to throw out immediately a large quantity of ballast so as to clear the obstacle. Then we rose at once to a great height and the London lights were lost to view, for we entered thick cloud banks in the midst of which we spent the rest of the night. This was rather dull. I tried to sleep in an incredibly uncomfortable position curled up on the sand bags at the bottom of the basket, constantly trodden on by my companions.

When dawn broke we sighted the other balloon following in our wake, and we signaled to each other with electric torches, but almost immediately we entered different air currents that carried us apart and we never sighted each other again.

We were not very certain of our whereabouts, but as we were traveling over nice open country Mr. Butler decided we could come down for breakfast. By delicately manipulating the safety valve he let out enough gas to enable the balloon to float gently down until the car rested on the grass, and then we opened our luncheon basket and started our meal. Of course it was impossible to leave the car, for the smallest lightening of the weight would have sent the balloon soaring upwards again. A group of laborers gathered round us, quite speechless with astonishment, and watched us eat, as though we were

inhabitants of another planet. When Mr. Butler heaved a sand bag over the side, we all bowed politely and said: "We must be getting on. . . . Good-by!" and the balloon immediately rose in the air and sailed away, leaving our ring of admirers below more bewildered than ever.

The sun came out and expanded our gas and sent us up to a great height. Our journey finished somewhere near Goodwood, where we came down in a field with a pretty hard bump that upset the car on its side and tumbled us all on the top of one another. We crawled out like dogs emerging from a kennel, and for days afterwards I followed the varying hues of my bruises with great interest.

A kind farmer, on whose land we had made this somewhat alarming descent, helped us to pick up the balloon and took us to his farm, where he fed us on delicious milk and eggs and afterwards drove us to the nearest station in his cart. We caught the next train back to London, and when I walked into my grandmother's drawing-room she said: "Well, dear, you went out early this morning!" She never knew of my night out, and I had just time to have my bath and change and go to a big luncheon party at Count Mensdorff's.

But the only dangerous ascent I made was from Paris in the autumn of the same year. I went over with Mrs. Assheton Harbord and Lord Royston, to see the start of the balloon race for the Gordon Bennett cup, in which several of our friends, including Charlie Rolls, were competing.

We made the acquaintance of a well-known balloon pilot, Jacques Faure, and we three arranged to make a night ascent with him. We started the evening after

the race in half a gale of wind. Some members of the Aero Club came to see us off, and shook their heads, saying that it was no weather for women to go up. But we were determined to start, and Jacques Faure, who was disappointed at not having taken part in the Gordon Bennett race, was very anxious to try and beat the distance made by the winner. However, they all agreed there was no danger of being blown seawards, and that we would probably breakfast next morning in Cologne! So we climbed into the car and the order was given to let go. Then followed the most wonderful experience. Night came on almost at once, while the gale rose and howled and the wind swirled round us in torrents. I had the perfect sensation of being a disembodied spirit, flying through the night noiselessly, smoothly, with no conception of where I was going. Unfortunately the pilot had no idea either, though he would not admit it. The pace at which the wind was carrying us completely upset his sense of navigation—if he had one, which I rather doubt. Now and then we saw lights at a great distance beneath us, but practically all the time the earth was hidden from view by the clouds. And so all night we rushed along through space.

Once the mist opened out beneath us and revealed what seemed a lighted pier, running out to sea over black waters; but before we had time to say to each other: "Well, this is the end!" we saw that there was land again on the other side; so we breathed once more. For five hours we were carried helplessly through the darkness on the wings of the gale, wondering how it was all going to end, but quite cool and calm. I really don't know why I was so unafraid: perhaps it was the glorious self-

confidence of youth! But I really felt invulnerable and immortal, with only an intense curiosity to see what was going to happen next.

In the end it was really Lord Royston who saved our lives. He was used to the sea, which our pilot was not, and he noticed a distant intermittent light which he recognized as that of a lighthouse. "It's the sea!" he shouted. "We must come down at once!"

Jacques Faure made up his mind instantly, and managed the descent in the most skillful manner, and it was no easy job, in absolute darkness and the fierce gale always blowing.

"Je vous previens, vous allez être bousculés!" he said, and we knew what this meant, so clung to the rigging like grim death, pulling ourselves up by our arms, so as not to get our legs broken when the crash came. Faure pulled the special emergency cord which rips up the side of the balloon and practically reduces it to a parachute. We came down in a ploughed field that the rain had reduced to the consistency of a feather bed, and tumbled one on the top of another, with the basket upside down over us like a lid, and the collapsed balloon covering us all with its vast folds!

We crawled out from underneath and found that we were all four quite unhurt, except for many bumps and bruises! But we didn't know in what country we were and still the wind howled and the rain swirled and the blackness was impenetrable. Faure thought we might still be in France, but he had to admit that he had really no idea. So leaving the collapsed balloon where it lay, we stumbled along a few yards till we came to a bank up which we climbed, and there was the sea at a higher

level than the field, so we knew we were on a dyke in Holland. And the sea was so near the spot where we had come down that we all shook hands! Our one idea after that was to find a house in which to take shelter, but it was an extraordinarily deserted part of Holland. Lord Royston got separated from the party owing to his kindness in going back to search for my handbag in the car of the balloon, and afterwards missing us in the dark. So we saw him no more till the following morning. The other three of us tramped along what seemed endless flats of mud, wondering whether we would ever see another human being again.

When we found a tiny house at last and hammered on the door, an upstairs window opened cautiously and a voice said something in an unknown language, and then the window was immediately closed again, quite relentlessly—there was nothing to do but to go on tramping through what remained of that seemingly endless night. Towards dawn we reached a village, and another house at which we knocked was more hospitable. The door was opened and we were allowed to enter. We pointed to the sky and said "Balloon!" in what we hoped was a Dutch accent, we also said "Paris," and with wide pantomimic gestures indicated that after a long flight we wanted to drink and sleep.

Our host was a fisherman and he was all kindness. I do not know if he understood how we had got to the village of Wilhelmstaal, but he saw we were tired and incredibly muddy and wet. He gave us all hot drinks and good bread, and then his daughter took Mrs. Harbord and myself up a ladder to a loft that must really have been the home of the Three Bears, dear to our

childhood, for in that low-raftered, queerly-shaped space were three little beds of different sizes, each with a canopy and curtains of gayly printed cotton. The girl placed a lighted candle on a chair and left us, and we did not lose a minute in peeling off our wet clothes and sinking into the downy depths of those delicious Dutch nests! We never knew if any one occupied the third bed for our eyes closed as soon as our heads touched the pillows, and broad daylight came much too early to suit us.

Jacques Faure meanwhile had disappeared with the fisherman and as soon as dawn broke went to recover the balloon, and incidentally Lord Royston, whom he found asleep in the car. That day a very queer-looking quartet traveled back to Paris. We had been extraordinarily improvident and brought nothing with us, barely an extra handkerchief or two stuffed in a pocket; even so it seemed incredible that what had been quite decent clothes twenty-four hours before could have become the garments we now wore. All the luggage we possessed was a deflated balloon, neatly packed in its own car.

We traveled by boat to Amsterdam and eventually caught the express to Paris. Our mud-caked condition aroused the curiosity of our fellow passengers, who after staring at us for a few moments all ended by asking the same question:

"Pardon, Mesdames et Messieurs, mais vous est-il arrivé un accident?"

Another very different ascent I made has remained in my memory as a most exquisite experience. It was on a

perfect summer evening in England, and we got among the clouds, neither above nor below them, but exactly on their level. They were rounded and solid, and possessed all the tints of opal and mother-of-pearl. They formed mountains and cliffs, long stretches of dim plains, mysterious pools and bays and little islands. We floated past all this dream country, feeling we had only to step ashore and wander in this new land whenever we felt inclined. Sometimes a white cliff towered above us, rather alarming in its solidity, but we gently drifted into it and were blinded for a few seconds by a thick mist until we floated out on the other side into new fairy scenery. After all these years I have never forgotten the charm of that dream evening.

I made my last balloon ascent the following year, soon after I had recovered from the very bad riding accident I had in Rome. I came to London and arranged to make an ascent with Mrs. Assheton Harbord and Sir Eldon Gorst, then Consul General in Egypt. I do not remember who was our pilot. We had a very bad descent in which we were dragged a considerable distance across a field. My hands and arms were caught under the car, and my unprotected face was only a few inches off the ground, being brushed by the long grass over which we were being blown. By an extraordinary piece of luck we encountered nothing more solid, and some laborer working in the field caught hold of our guide rope and managed to stop us before we reached a thick hedge of brambles, which would undoubtedly have torn my eyes to pieces. I was very much bruised and shaken and found that I had been terrified for the first time in my life. Since then my nerve has gone and I have never

been in a balloon again. And I think very few other people have either.

It was an unsatisfactory sort of amusement, slow and dull on quiet days once one had got used to the novelty of the thing, and too dangerous in anything like a strong wind when one could be easily carried out to sea, or smashed up in an awkward descent; while the inability of the pilot to influence the direction of the balloon made it utterly useless for practical purposes. But, as I say, it prepared the way for better things.

I hunted for a few seasons in Rome soon after I married, but never in a very comfortable way. I had ridden all my life, ever since dear old Carrier had put me on Merrylegs' fat little back when I was four years old; but I had never hunted, though I had longed to, and I knew nothing about horses. My husband and all his brothers detested riding, and did not know a horse from a cow, so I had no one in the family to help me. A friend of ours, Felice Scheibler of Milan, who came to Rome for the hunting season, now and then lent me a mount and looked after me in a rather rough, brotherly fashion. I enjoyed those days, but I was always rather frightened owing to my inexperience and being on a strange horse. I used to say that I believed the others were hunting a fox, but that personally I hunted Scheibler, and never lost sight of his big red back in front of me if I could possibly help it. I longed for a horse of my own, but had no money to buy one.

My mother-in-law had been a very good horsewoman and a fearless rider to hounds in her day, though she always rode without a stirrup, which I am told gave her

a peculiar seat. She was very fond of horses and had a stud farm of her own down in the Pontine Marshes, where she bred horses that she afterwards sold to the Italian Army. They were known for having the hardest mouths in the world, though no doubt they had other better points. Before the day my father-in-law provided the Duchess and myself each with our first motor car, all the horses in the Palazzo Caetani stables came from her stud farm, and many alarming episodes did I have with the pair allotted to my use. They specialized in refusing to stand still whenever I was entering or alighting from my carriage, though at other moments they willingly stood for hours sunk in a deep torpor. Now and then for a change they ran away quite unexpectedly, and for no apparent reason. Once they did so in the crowded Via del Plebiscito, when I had hastily to hand my baby out of the carriage into the arms of a man who was running alongside and who nursed him carefully until all the excitement was over and the horses finally disentangled from the harness and pole in which they had managed to tie themselves up at the end of their mad career.

About forty years ago, when Buffalo Bill and his Wild West Show came to Rome for the first time, the Duchess issued a challenge to the cowboys to ride her horses of the Pontine Marshes, while she backed her *butteri* to ride the bucking bronchos of the show. Buffalo Bill came to lunch with the Duke and Duchess to arrange the details of the contest, and looked amazing with his long hair and Wild West clothes in the setting of the old Roman palace. (All this, of course, was long before my time, but I was told all about it afterwards.) The horses were

brought up to Rome from the Pontine Marshes, and the contest took place just outside the walls of the city. I believe the *butteri,* with few exceptions, were thrown by the bucking bronchos, but the Duchess always declared that the cowboys won the challenge unfairly, for they closed the nostrils of the Italian horses with some sort of cruel contrivance, and they were reduced to quietness by suffocation.

To return to my own hunting experiences: the Duchess announced one day that she had a horse at her stud farm that would do for me as a hunter, and would have it sent up to Rome. I was delighted at this unexpected favor, the horse arrived, and I arranged to make my *début* on it with the Bracciano staghounds. When I trotted up to join the field I saw my friends looking at me very curiously, or rather at my horse, and finally Pompeo Campello, who was afterwards Master of the Roman foxhounds, came up to me and said: "What on earth are you riding, Donna Vittoria?"

"Well," I answered, in my innocence, "it has just come up from the Pontine Marshes, and its coat is rather long. isn't it? But I suppose it will carry me all right."

"It's *coat* doesn't matter," said Campello, "but it's already lame, and do you know if it can jump?"

"I have no idea; I've never tried it, but the Duchess says . . ."

"Oh, it's one of *those* horses!" said Campello knowingly. "Then for Heaven's sake go slowly and don't try to jump."

When the hounds started off in full cry, my Pontine Marshes mount was electrified, and started off likewise. He may have been lame, but he could go, and his mouth

was of iron. There was no question of steering, let alone stopping him! I saw the hounds and huntsmen ahead, and realized that we had passed every one else and were rapidly catching them up. My only fear was that I should be carried past the hounds.

But providentially a stone wall rose up in front of me to prevent that crowning disgrace. Hounds and huntsmen flew over it and my strange steed unhesitatingly charged it too. He hit the wall with all four hoofs at the same time, turned a somersault and landed us both on the other side. As I struggled to my feet I had a vision of all the field streaming past me and heard my friends shouting: "Are you all right?" as they galloped on. Only one man stopped, and he was an artillery officer whom I did not know at all well at the time, and who is now Generale Bodrero. He lent me his handkerchief, for my nose was bleeding, he caught my horse and put me into the saddle again, and, of course, he lost the run and I spoiled his day. But I always remember his kindness with gratitude.

Though I never saw that particular horse again—I did not inquire about him, and I think he vanished from the Caetani stables and returned to the seclusion of the Pontine Marshes—my unfortunate experiences continued.

I was told of a horse I could buy for two thousand lire, a great bargain. They did not also tell me that he was a well-known runaway, that no groom could manage him, which was the reason of his cheapness. Again I was absurdly trustful and said I would try him at Bracciano. Once more when the hounds found and went away my mount took himself off too, at a breakneck speed which proved utterly uncontrollable. He headed

straight for what we call in the Campagna Romana a *marrana,* a fairly wide stream sunk between very steep banks, which one has to ride down and up again to cross when one comes to a suitable place. I heard a shout from a friend behind me:

"Stop! Vittoria, stop! Don't you see where you are going?"

My runaway cleared the whole *marrana* with a fine leap, landed on his knees on the further side, scrambled up and was off again. I was unfortunately still on his back, and quite powerless. I confess I was frightened to death! Then somehow a story my father had once told me flashed across my brain: how he had once seen the beautiful Empress of Austria stop her runaway horse in the hunting field, by turning him away from the hunt and letting him gallop round in a ring until he tired himself out. So I tried the Empress's dodge, not so coolly or gracefully as she must have done, but with a terrified sob in my throat and a wild clutching of the right-hand rein. I managed to turn the brute away from the electrifying sight of the hounds in front and the thunder of the other horses' hoofs behind him, and eventually, soothed by the empty spaces of the Campagna, he consented to stop. Scheibler's groom came up and took charge of me, and pretty little Contessa Scheibler, who was destined to die so young, insisted on my taking her horse and was plucky enough to tackle the runaway for the rest of the day. Luckily he had worn himself out with his wild beginning, and she had no real trouble.

I eventually bought a big gray Irish hunter of Scheibler's which did not suit me as well as did some of his other horses he occasionally lent me, but whose price

suited my slender purse better. He could jump anything, but was capable of refusing everything, and I never knew what his mood was going to be. I think he took an evil delight in keeping me on tenter hooks as to his intentions.

Even though I was often nervous, I loved my hunting: the whole day was such fun. Those wonderful winter mornings with bright sunshine and a tramontana wind blowing, that made one feel so well and put such exhilaration into everything; the drive out to the meet and a wonderful meal, half luncheon and half tea, partaken of at about four o'clock in the tent, while a whole lot of us discussed every event of the run from start to finish!

But hunting was not destined to prove lucky for me. At the end of the season of 1907 I went out one afternoon to exercise my gray hunter, accompanied only by my cousin, Marcantonio Colonna. We were cantering side by side over the lonely plains past Ponte Nomentana when my horse put his foot in a hole and came down heavily, rolling on me and doing a good deal of damage, as I have described in another chapter.

Poor Marcantonio had rather a bad time of it, as he did not want to leave me lying alone in the middle of the Campagna, while he went for help, and on the other hand there was no one else to go. Some shepherds came up to see what was the matter and gave me a little water to drink, but they refused to go all the way to Rome on foot. The situation was saved by a man with a gun who came along and turned out to be the tutor of the Barberini boys on a shooting holiday. He went to fetch a cart he had left somewhere on the road, and I was

hoisted in it and conveyed—a very sorry figure—to Sant' Agnese, near the Porta Pia entrance of Rome, where my carriage was waiting. I must have looked very queer, for it seems that on the way home the footman asked the coachman if he had any idea who it was they were bringing back to Rome!

I suffered a good deal for some days, but considering my injuries I recovered fairly quickly. That day ended my hunting career. I sold the gray horse that I now disliked, and though I always meant to make a fresh start, somehow the years slipped away, and all that remains to remind me of those days is a saddle and a pair of riding boots put away in a cupboard!

Now, I enjoy the charm of the Campagna Romana in the calmer surroundings of the Acqua Santa Golf Club, and spend happy hours there, playing over that sporting course, with its background of blue Alban hills and long line of aqueducts. There is also a *marrana* there, which gives me a good deal of trouble, but less danger and excitement than the one at Bracciano, which I crossed on the runaway horse.

CHAPTER XIII

SUPERSTITIONS AND EARTHQUAKES

I

THERE are no ghosts in Rome, at least no officially recognized ones. The Roman Catholic Church does not encourage her followers to recognize their existence but at the same time commands them to believe in the immortality of the soul. That a soul should attempt to prove its immortality by reappearing is considered by her a wicked action. *Cela ne se fait pas,* as the French dowagers say in the Faubourg. Souls must know their places, they must be either in heaven or in hell, or in that most uncomfortable of all waiting-rooms, purgatory.

It is bad form among educated classes in Italy to disagree with the authorities of the Church, so ghosts are not spoken about, and in fact are so completely ignored that they are really discouraged and don't attempt to manifest themselves any longer.

But on the other hand there are plenty of superstitions, and it is considered rather chic to believe in the *jettatura.* Pretty fingers with pinked-up nails hastily "make horns" when certain people are referred to, and quite serious men would undertake anything rather than pronounce the name of some one reported to have the Evil Eye.

In my younger days an old gentleman lived in Rome who was universally known as the Marchese of Piazza

del Popolo. On no account would any one mention his name, though he was quite a nice old boy and a member of the Caccia Club. He was rather a friend of my father's, and of a good many other members of the Club, but though they were quite cordial to him when they met (as a matter of fact it is considered dangerous to be rude to a *jettatore*) none of them would have dreamed of traveling in his company or even going out for a walk with him, while to accept an invitation to his house would have been indeed looking for trouble!

When I was sixteen I was very ill indeed with appendicitis, and as it was not the fashion then to operate at once, I was in a critical state for a long time. The doctors' bulletin and a book were deposited at the porter's lodge at Palazzo Colonna and all my father's friends used to come and inquire about me and write their names in the book. Every time the Marchese of Piazza del Popolo did this, my temperature would fly up and my condition become worse. My father was frantic! I remember hearing him say angrily to his sister, Duchess Sforza, who was sitting by my bedside: "I will not allow that man to write his name in the book! See what happens every time he comes." I don't know what instructions he gave the porter, but in spite of these unwelcome attentions I managed to recover all right.

The Marchese of Palazza del Popolo had a son who began to go about to balls at the same time as my sister and I did. He was at once nicknamed "L'Allievo Jettatore" (the Jettatore Pupil), for short, otherwise he would have been called "The-son-of-the-Marchese-of-Piazza-del-Popolo." He was a nice quiet boy, but he could not live down his father's reputation. Every girl

who danced with him made horns all the time with the hand resting on his shoulder. He got to know of this, and it preyed on his mind till his nerves completely gave way. He retired from the world and spent most of his time alone in his room. One day he could bear it no longer; he opened the window and flung himself head foremost into the Piazza del Popolo. He fell on a passing policeman and injured him rather badly, but was himself unhurt. "There now!" said all Rome triumphantly. "Didn't I tell you so?" And the poor young man vanished from Rome, never to return.

The old Marchese changed his dwelling, which was a bore for his friends, as they now had to remember to call him the Marchese of Passeggiata di Ripetta, which was longer. But he lived only a short time after this, and at his death his son assumed another title, married a pretty American girl who evidently did not believe in the jettatura, and has lived happily ever after, but *not* in Rome, so all is well.

My father told me of a friend of his at Naples who once met a well-known jettatore in the street, and was invited by him to go for a walk. He accepted in fear and trembling, not being quite certain whether it would not be more dangerous to refuse. After they had gone a few yards, my father's friend slipped, fell down and broke his leg. Sitting on the ground, he seized the jettatore's hand and shook it warmly.

"Thank you, thank you!" he said, beaming with relief, "I might have been killed, and instead you have only broken my leg."

What the jettatore answered my father never related.

I know of a curious thing that happened at Naples in another line of superstition, only a few years ago.

A man dressmaker, of Belgian origin, had a very smart establishment in that town, and made dresses for most of the *élégantes* of Italy, amassing in consequence a large fortune. He had a son, rather a handsome young man, tall and strong and well developed, but who was afflicted with social aspirations. He wanted to belong to the best club in Naples, of which a royal prince is President. The members of the club grumbled. They said he was only the son of a dressmaker and they did not care to have him in their midst. The old father was furious. "If that is the objection," he said, "I won't be a dressmaker any longer." And he wound up his business.

He was quite free to do this, but he did it in a very heartless way.

He had a woman partner, with whom he had been on intimate terms for a good many years. She was no longer young, and he cast her off, making no provision for her, so that she was obliged to earn her living as a *vendeuse* in another dressmaking establishment in Rome. He turned all the fitters and workers out into the street with only a month's wages between them and starvation. They had all worked in his house ten, twenty, or more years, one old woman as many as forty years.

Some time later I met his chief fitter, now employed elsewhere, and she told me the whole story. Then she added, with her mouth full of pins, as we were trying on, "But, you know, you can't do that sort of thing in Naples."

"Why not?" I asked, my mind wandering at once towards knives and *vendette*.

"Well, it is very dangerous. You see all the women got together for several evenings running, and they cursed Monsieur G——. They did it so well that his son died within three months, and he had never had a day's illness in his life!"

One of the most famous mediums that ever existed came from Naples—Eusapia Palladino, who died only a few years ago. She was of very common origin, her parents being peasants from the Puglie, in the south of Italy, and she spent most of her life in great poverty, trying to run a miserable little shop in Naples. She could scarcely read or write and was not particularly intelligent. The neighbors considered her a witch and resorted to her frequently for charms and fortune-telling. She was discovered by some scientific man who was impressed by her power as a medium and helped her to develop it. In the end she became a great celebrity and toured all Italy and Europe. She was sometimes accused of cheating, and I believe in her last years she resorted to tricks whenever she thought she could deceive her public, but this was to save her strength that was sapped by so many sittings. Her powers were undoubtedly very great and she often produced most curious phenomena.

When my mother lived at Palazzo San Teodoro in Naples, many years ago, a friend of hers, an Englishman, was anxious to witness a séance, so my mother arranged for Eusapia Palladino to come to the house. My mother told me they formed a circle in half darkness, and that curious things seemed to occur; at least the furniture moved about and my mother felt her head and face touched in an unaccountable way. The Englishman sud-

denly declared that he was sure the whole thing was a fake, and that Eusapia had put her foot on his lap! The sitting broke up in confusion, and the medium left the house greatly offended, refusing to accept the fee that my mother wished to press on her. What really happened on that occasion I cannot say, but I think there is nothing more tiresome than the person who is obstinately incredulous and declares from the start, with his eyes tight shut, that nothing but the absolutely obvious exists, and that anything he himself cannot explain must therefore be a fraud. Undoubtedly manifestations can occur during properly conducted séances, but whether they have anything to do with the supernatural or are merely physical, it is difficult to say. Personally, I believe in the latter theory.

My friend Rino Solinas had some interesting séances with Eusapia Palladino when she was at her best, and this is the exact account of them written down by him personally for me, and which I have translated from the original Italian:

I knew the Palladino about thirty years ago, that is when she possessed an extraordinary power and had certainly no need to resort to tricks, as I believe she did later. Marchesa Paulucci, now Madame Garcia Mansilla, told me of the séances that were taking place at Contessa Brenda's house with the Palladino as medium. Though I had the greatest faith in Marchesa Paulucci's intelligence, and especially in her common sense, I said I could never believe the things she told me unless I saw them for myself. So I was admitted to a séance that took place in Contessa Brenda's house, Palazzo Lovatti in the Piazza del Popolo.

We were five people present in all including the medium; that is, Contessa Brenda, Marchesa Paulucci, Sernicoli and myself—all people, except Eusapia, absolutely above all suspicion.

We were in a large drawing-room with three big windows which occupied the corner of the house towards the Piazza. As it was three o'clock in an afternoon of June, the shutters were *slightly* closed to keep out the glare of the sun, but otherwise the room was in *full daylight.* Eusapia was completely immovable, for I held her left hand firmly in my right, with my knee over her knee, and my foot on hers, while Sernicoli secured her in the same way on the other side. Among the several remarkable things that occurred on that occasion were these:

1. The piano that stood four or five yards off played by itself several times.

2. The chair on which I was sitting was drawn away from under me and flew over my head and Sernicoli's, landing on the floor behind him, after which it turned round and came back to its original place. As I hesitated to sit down on it again it began pushing against my legs, and finally an invisible hand pressed on my shoulder and forced me down into the chair once more.

3. I *felt* a hand pass over my head, ruffling up my hair and bringing it down over my eyes.

When I returned home I told my brother about our séance and he said he would only believe there was no trick if Eusapia could produce the same manifestations in his own drawing-room, in broad daylight, arriving there last of all, just before the sitting. We arranged all this, and another séance took place at my brother's house, in a room which had two big windows.

This time we were six people present, Contessa Brenda, Marchesa Paulucci, two foreign diplomatists and I, be-

sides Eusapia who came when we were already assembled. We kept her from moving in the usual way, and this time she was held by my brother and one of the diplomatists, who is now an ambassador. This man had been in Rome only two months, and we knew absolutely nothing of him and his life. Marchesa Paulucci had made his acquaintance as he brought her a letter of introduction from mutual friends in Paris.

As soon as we had settled down, Eusapia went into a trance and apparently a dead brother of this diplomatist began to speak through her medium, saying some rather unpleasant and embarrassing things, amongst others that both he and his mother, who was also dead, were very grieved at the life he was leading. Our man seemed very much upset and asked his brother to give him a proof of his genuineness, whereupon the piano that was some way off began to play a tune that was unknown to all of us. The diplomatist became very pale and said that he had composed that music himself, and that his brother, when alive, used constantly to play it. After the sitting he played it to us himself.

During the sitting an old mandolin that lay forgotten behind a piece of furniture, started to fly up and down the long room, at the height of about four or five meters from the ground, playing all the time, and extremely badly, as it had only a few strings left, and they were all out of tune. It continued to do this, even when other manifestations were going on.

When the séance was over we sat about eating ices, as it was an extremely hot day, while the guests examined my brother's art collections and it seemed that the whole thing was at an end. The old mandolin had come to rest on the table which had served for the sitting. Contessa Brenda suddenly said to Eusapia: "Do throw the mandolin on the ground!"

Eusapia was some distance off, but with her open hand she made a brusque gesture as before, and the mandolin fell violently on the floor. Everybody looked round, rather startled, and on hearing what had occurred some one asked her to do something else of the same sort.

Eusapia then held her closed fist over the table, about a yard above it, and as she slowly raised her fist the table followed it until it was rearing up on only two legs. It was a strong kitchen table, made of deal. We *all* then leaned on it as hard as we could, but it was quite impossible to move it, and only when Eusapia opened her fist did the table fall down again on to its four legs.

To finish up she gave us a last exhibition of her powers. On another table stood a flower vase containing eight or ten long-stemmed carnations. Eusapia spread both her hands above it at the height of about a yard, and made the same brusque gesture as before, and all the flowers flew out of the vase on to the carpet.

Of course many books have been published about Eusapia Palladino with endless accounts of more scientific sittings that have given even more remarkable results, but it is interesting to have a first-hand description from some one whose veracity one can absolutely trust, of these strange powers that some human beings possess and that are still so inexplicable.

The lower classes in Italy are passionately fond of the Lotto—a sort of national lottery run by the state and which brings in an enormous yearly revenue for the country. Five numbers are extracted every Saturday in seven of the principal towns of Italy, and the people bet by taking tickets for the number they fancy. As the numbers range from 1 to 90 the chances of winning are ex-

tremely small. If two of the five numbers the player has chosen come out, it is called an *ambo* and he receives 250 times his stake; for having selected three numbers he receives 4,250 times its value, and that is called a *terno.* It is an ordinary way of describing a stroke of good luck, even in cultivated Italian, to say: "I have won a terno at the Lotto." For the quaterno, four numbers, the player gets sixty thousand times his stake, if he is able to survive the shock! I am told that if you are rightly inspired to choose all five numbers, you do not, however, receive more payment than for a quaterno, which seems hardly fair; but I suppose it does not happen very often.

I believe that the maximum sum one may stake is very small; the people play in coppers as a rule, and a few lire are considered quite dashing.

A book is published, which every *donna del popolo* (woman of the people) possesses, called *L'Albergo della Fortuna,* and in it every possible word or event is recorded with a corresponding number, so that after a dream, or some interesting occurrence, it is easy to look up five numbers relating to the affair, and play them at the Lotto. For instance, if a well-known actor should be run over by a cab, the people would play "actor 27," "accident 24," "cab 36," and probably add the actor's age and the number of the cab to complete the series. When an event of national importance takes place, the Lotto bureau is crowded with people anxious to play the combination of numbers they imagine will come out that week in consequence of what has happened! I am told that when the Pope dies, or when there is an earthquake, it is scarcely possible to get near the Lotto *employé.*

The more educated classes do not trouble themselves

about the Lotto as they know how extremely remote the chances of winning are. But the most extraordinary instance I know of a dream coming true connected with the Lotto, happened some years ago to a friend of mine, Contessa Emma Carpegna, who gave me every detail of it.

She was staying at her father's villa near Rimini when one night she dreamed she was in church, preparing to go to confession. As she approached the confessional she noticed that the priest inside it was laughing, which annoyed her very much. All the same she knelt down and he said to her, while continuing to laugh, "Do you want me to give you the numbers for the Lotto?" She was so indignant that she got up and left the confessional. As she did so she noticed that there were several people standing around it, and among them a well-dressed man, obviously a gentleman, who was writing down some numbers that the priest was dictating to him. She approached and looked over his shoulder to see what he had written, and saw distinctly the numbers—3-33-23. At the same time the priest said loudly to her: "And as for you, play also the numbers that one of the hermaphrodite family will give you!"

Contessa Carpegna awoke, and as pencil and writing pad happened to be near her bed, she wrote down the numbers. Next morning she had forgotten her dream, and only on finding the numbers she had written did it all come back to her.

She had never played at the Lotto in her life, and did not even know how it was done, but she told her maid about the curious dream, and she at once produced *L'Albergo della Fortuna,* the famous book of numbers. They searched for a number corresponding to the word

"hermaphrodite," but drew a blank—such a contingency had not been foreseen by the compilers of the book! While they were doing this the entrance bell rang and a begging friar was seen at the gate, asking for alms. Contessa Carpegna went down to speak to him and gave him five lire, saying: "Give me some numbers to play on the Lotto." "Signora mia," answered the friar, "I know nothing about such things. But I have heard say that number 60 means charity. Why not play that, and add five for the lire you have given me?"

My friend did not go herself to the Lotto bureau as she knew so little about the whole thing, but she sent her gardener to stake an infinitesimal sum for her—I think two lire.

The whole five numbers came out in the exact sequence: 3-33-23-60-5! and she became the possessor of a nice fat sum.

A curious fact she learned afterwards was that in the countryside the inhabitants jokingly called the begging friars Hermaphrodites. At the same time she saw in the newspapers that a lawyer of Bologna had won a large sum that week on playing the *terno:* 3-33-23. She always regretted not having taken steps to make his acquaintance, for she is convinced that he was the man she saw in her dream standing near the confessional, writing down those exact numbers. She said his face was so clearly impressed on her memory that she could certainly have recognized him.

But in spite of the inactivity of Italian ghosts, there were very queer happenings only a few years ago in a lovely old villa near Lucca, called Camigliano.

It now belongs to Marchese Carlo Torrigiani. He took me to see it when it still belonged to his old uncle Marchese Torrigiani, who lived there during the greater part of the year. It was a most enchanting old house, full of furniture of all periods accumulated by successive generations, from classic "cinquecento" cassoni to the most amusing Louis Philippe fire screens and work tables. Among other things I noted a canopied bed with the most exquisitely embroidered hangings I have ever seen. The gardens were equally delightful, with huge cypresses and terraces and many eighteenth century practical jokes in the shape of unexpected sprays of water that gushed at one from flower beds and odd corners.

But to return to the ghost story of Camigliano: Carlo Torrigiani told me that in 1919 his uncle made a few alterations in the house. There was an old cupboard, or rather a glass case walled into a niche in the basement, which used to contain an important collection of family heirlooms. These were removed elsewhere, and as the glass case had very nice wood carving and was beginning to suffer from the damp, he decided to have it repaired and placed in a room on the first floor of the villa. Next to this room was another one called Galleria della Meridiana or Gallery of the Sundial, and beyond it a few rooms that the old Marchese rearranged and gave to his nephew and his wife when they came to stay with him. Their baby with her English nurse was also given a room in this same suite.

Almost immediately after their arrival extraordinary things began to occur. When the family sat on the terrace steps in front of the house enjoying the cool of the evening, handfuls of gravel would be thrown in their

faces from invisible sources. Cries and moans were heard proceeding from the gardens and park, with such persistence that they had the various ponds emptied and dragged for fear some one had fallen in and got drowned.

The child's nurse was twice found in a dead faint, and declared that it was in consequence of having seen a face looking at her from between the bed curtains in her room.

But the most curious happenings took place in the Galleria della Meridiana, situated between the young Torrigiani's bedroom and the room containing the old glass case. This gallery was furnished rather stiffly with Louis XV armchairs placed round the walls, alternately with consoles of the same period, and one large sofa with many cushions. The consoles had heavy marble tops and would have been hard work to move for two men, yet they were constantly found in the morning standing in the middle of the gallery with all the china ornaments on them intact. The chairs were all pushed about and one was always upset, while the cushions of the sofa were all crumpled and thrown on the floor as though many people had been sitting there. Violent noises were heard throughout the night, but ceased as soon as the door was opened.

This state of things continued for so long that the young Torrigiani couple with their baby and nurse fled to another part of the house, and Carlo's father, who was in Florence, on his son's request went to consult a well-known medium. This woman did not know the name of the Villa or any of the details of what had been occurring there, but her answer came: "Put the cupboard

back where it was before and the chair 4 will not fall any longer."

They could not imagine what "chair 4" meant, but on examining the one that was invariably found upside down in the morning they discovered a large number 4 painted under its seat, that no one in the house had ever noticed before. Carlo Torrigiani showed me this chair when he took me over Camigliano. Evidently the family ghosts objected to the glass case being moved from the niche it had occupied so long, but, on the other hand, Marchese Torrigiani was pleased with his new arrangement and did not want to replace his nice old bit of furniture in the basement!

Carlo's mother asked the parish priest to come and bless that wing of the house, and she fastened holy medals on the walls of the gallery. She also had many masses said for the repose of any unhappy souls connected with Camigliano and when I went there three years ago, there had been no more ghostly manifestations, though the glass cupboard was still in its new place.

Since then the Galleria della Meridiana has been partly demolished and transformed into an open loggia.

II

I have heard superstitious people attribute the great earthquake which took place at Messina on December 28, 1908, to a sacrilegious poem addressed to the Deity which was published in some anticlerical paper of the town, the refrain of which was: "Manda pure il terremoto!" ("Send also the earthquake!") I never saw the poem in question, but I heard it seriously discussed, and I think

there is no doubt that it appeared just before the earthquake occurred.

When the first news of the catastrophe came to Rome I immediately began working as hard as I could to obtain a ship from the government, which could be transformed into a Red Cross hospital and sail at once for the scene of the disaster.

In those days I didn't even belong to the Red Cross, but my energy was great and also my faith in human beings, so I rushed headlong into everything that was no business of mine at all.

The President of the Roman branch of the Red Cross was old and rather bewildered, but he was a charming man and a friend of ours. So I accompanied him to the Prime Minister, Signor Giolitti, with whom I had already made an appointment, and did most of the talking for him. I explained how essential it was to do as much rescue work as possible, by way of the sea; it was much easier than by land because everything seemed to have been destroyed and communications were almost impossible; also that it was imperative not to waste a minute as people were dying under the ruins while we were speaking.

I remember with gratitude that Signor Giolitti listened to me attentively and did not inquire whether I was officially appointed to occupy myself with the matter. It would have been difficult to explain on what authority I was there at all!

Next day the Red Cross was given a steamer of the Navigazione Italiana, the *Taormina,* which was hurriedly fitted up as a hospital ship, and she sailed from Spezia on January first with thirty Red Cross nurses and several

doctors on board. As I had been instrumental in securing the ship the authorities allowed me to go too, though I had no official standing, and distribute the cases of clothing that kind people had collected that were to be taken out on the ship. We reached Messina at dawn and found a strange city of distorted buildings leaning in every direction and assuming all kinds of fantastic shapes —the nightmare of a futurist architect! In many cases on the sea front—the "Palazzata," that had been the pride of Messina—the more solidly built façades were still standing, while the rest of the houses poured through the front doors in fan-shaped avalanches of rubbish. As a matter of fact, not one house was left standing and the whole of Messina was one vast dust heap from which arose thick columns of smoke in various places. A strange contrast behind all this pitiless destruction was the long line of mountains, pink and mauve and exquisite in the early morning sun.

We had a little group of wretched Sicilians on board, who all had their families in or near Messina and had managed by dint of imploring to get a passage out on the hospital ship. There was a schoolmaster, a clerk, a policeman, and several sailors. They sat huddled together, united in their terrible anxiety. As soon as they could land, they all vanished and we never saw them again, except the schoolmaster. He told me that he had found his father's house absolutely destroyed and no sign of its inhabitants, so having nowhere to go he returned to the ship and worked silently at odd jobs in the hospital.

There was a gray-haired sailor among our crew who came from a village near Reggio, and he spent most of his time on deck in mute despair, looking at the coast.

When we entered the port of Messina several rowboats came alongside, and in one he recognized a neighbor of his and called to him for news. I remember the splendid gesture with which the other man stood up in the boat and flung out his arms. "Tutti salvi! Tutti salvi!" ("They are all safe!") he shouted, and the gray-haired sailor dropped forward in a dead faint.

When we anchored in front of the devastated Palazzata we saw men scurrying up and down the dislocated quays, carrying stretchers and bundles, and soon they began to bring us out their wounded in rowboats, so that the hospital ship was soon filled. Some English, German, and Russian ships that were in the Mediterranean at the time had been the first to arrive on the scene after the earthquake, and their officers and men worked splendidly at rescue work and saved many lives among the smoking ruins. They brought us all their wounded, and it was a gruesome procession of stretchers all day long. Our hands were very full indeed.

Some of the poor wretches had been dug out only that morning, which meant that they had been buried alive for six days, without food or water, and in most cases very seriously wounded. One woman had a baby with her which was born while she was under the ruins, but she was unhurt and was soon walking about. Among those who had gone mad with terror was a handsome young woman, whose curly black hair stood out all round her face, giving her the look of a classical Medusa. No one knew her story, and day and night she shrieked in tones of agonized terror: "I cani, Maria, i cani! Manda via i cani, Maria, manda via i cani!" ("The dogs, Maria, send away the dogs, Maria, send away the dogs!") There

were dreadful tales of the wounded being attacked by dogs during those first days of chaos, before the soldiers were ordered to shoot the animals.

So many poor souls were carried on board only to die. A pretty girl of only twenty-five, with a waxen face and quite paralyzed, told me that her husband had thrown himself on her when the ceiling collapsed and tried to protect her with his body. But it was of no avail, and her back was broken. She died painlessly, repeating to herself: "How good he was," and blessing him to the last. He was also on the boat, very seriously wounded, but I do not know what became of him. As a rule the more uneducated classes recovered quicker, especially morally.

One of the greatest tragedies of Messina was the collapse and burning of the Hotel Trinacria. Only a few days before a smart wedding had taken place there, when the Duca di Castoria, elder son of the Principe di Monteroduni of Naples, married Signorina Maria Ajossa, daughter of Marchese and Marchesa Ajossa. The young couple left for their honeymoon, but the Ajossas and their younger daughter, Alfrida, instead of returning to their home in the country decided to stay on for a while at the Hotel in Messina. When the terrible crash came, the lives of the Marchese and Marchesa Ajossa were saved in the most remarkable way: The cupboard near their bed fell over and leant against the wall on the other side which luckily did not collapse, thus making a bridge under which they lay practically uninjured. But the girl and her governess were sleeping in the wing of the hotel which became a total ruin. It is hoped that they were killed on the spot, for the following night a

fearful fire broke out and everything that remained of Hotel Trinacria was destroyed. Poor little Alfrida's remains were only identified long afterwards by the chain and medal she wore round her neck. Castoria later on told me himself that of the two hundred and seventy guests who were present at the wedding breakfast, two hundred and thirty were killed a few days later, and among the survivors at least fifteen were not in Messina at the time, which shows the appalling percentage of deaths among the population.

Castoria also told me of the tragic case of a man they knew in the Hotel Trinacria. He managed to escape practically unhurt and could hear his son calling to him under the ruins, in fact, near enough for them to speak to each other. He ascertained that the boy was not badly wounded and went to get help to dig him out. With enormous difficulty he found some men whom he was able to persuade to come next morning, after which he returned and stayed near the ruins to encourage the boy through the long night. But meanwhile the fire broke out and spread nearer and nearer, and the wretched man, alone and powerless, had to witness his son being slowly burned alive!

Prince Cuto's sister, Contessa Cianciafara, who lived with her husband and son at Messina, was also killed, but her body was not found for a long time, so considerable doubt as to her fate existed. At one time the Queen thought she might have been one of the wounded who were carried on board the hospital ship on which she herself came down to Messina. Her Majesty said that a desperately wounded woman, who died soon afterwards, opened her eyes and murmured: "Maestà," as the

Queen leaned over her, and the peculiar intonation of her voice reminded her of some one she knew. At the time the Queen did not know that Contessa Cianciafara was at Messina, and had never met her. It was only later, on hearing she was missing, that her Majesty said to one of her suite, "I have a feeling that the poor woman who said 'Maestà' must have been Guilia Trigona's sister, for she had exactly her voice." But it was probably the Sicilian accent that reminded the Queen of her lady-in-waiting, for I believe Contessa Cianciafara's body was eventually found, under the ruins of her house, by her own son.

It is curious to note the tragedy, pure Greek in its completeness, of the Cuto family. Besides Contessa Cianciafara another sister came to a violent end: Contessa Trigona, one of the Queen's ladies-in-waiting, who was brutally murdered in Rome a few years ago by a young madman, Tenente Paternò. Their sister-in-law, Prince Cuto's wife, a Russian, committed suicide by veronal poisoning even more recently. Young Conte Cianciafara, who, as a boy of twelve, nearly lost his reason trying to find his mother after the earthquake, married a few years ago and his first child was burned alive in its cradle!

To return to my own experiences at Messina. I came across a very strange case that I noted down at the time. A youth from Messina was doing his military service and was quartered in Naples. On the night of the twenty-eighth he dreamed that he heard his fiancée, a little servant girl called Domenica Spadaro who lived at Messina, calling on him loudly for help from under some ruins. Next morning came the news of the earthquake,

and he was sent with his regiment to Messina to do rescue work. The following night, again on the next, he had exactly the same dream: there was always Domenica's voice calling for help. When the regiment arrived at Messina he had to work with the other soldiers where he was told to, but he was in great anxiety and asked his captain for leave to go and search for his fiancée. Luckily the captain was a kind man and, believing his story, gave him the required permission. The poor little soldier found the house in which Domenica used to live, in ruins, and began to dig. It took a very long time, for he was alone, and he had to work among the stones and plaster and rubbish with only his faith to sustain him. On the *ninth day* after the earthquake he finally heard the voice of his dreams, this time in daylight, and quite near to him, and soon afterwards he was able to remove the last obstacle and carry his Domenica out into God's blessed sunshine. She had a broken arm and a few deep scratches on one of her legs, but otherwise was not much the worse. I had gone ashore with a member of the Red Cross committee and I found this girl lying on a mattress under an improvised tent on the quay, with the soldier sitting beside her holding her hand, and they were both laughing with joy. I made arrangements to take her back to the hospital ship with me, and it was there that I eventually heard her story. She was, of course, of the peasant class, very strong and hardy, and had apparently suffered very little during the time she was buried, and she had been quite certain that her young man would come to her rescue. "And the first thing I saw was him," she concluded when she told me her story, considering it quite a natural affair.

On the sixth of January we left Messina with two hundred wounded and thirty refugees on board. I shall never forget that voyage with such a cargo of pain, especially as the Red Cross organization in those days was very incomplete. The groaning and the cries were terrible. We stopped at Naples in the cold, grim dawn to land those who had died during the night, and then went on to Leghorn to take our wounded to the hospital there.

Almost all our patients were of the lowest classes, but among them I noticed one who gave me no trouble at all, and who in fact was trying quite quietly to die of hunger by attracting no attention to himself and turning his face to the wall. I tried to make friends with him, and as he spoke real Italian and not the incomprehensible patois of the others, I was able to understand his story.

He was a schoolmaster, but he also had some other work—I think connected with electric lighting of Messina—that sometimes took him away from home at night. This saved his life, for when the earthquake came the room he was working in only partially collapsed so he escaped with cut head, broken arm, and sprained foot. His wife and six children were killed in their home, which was entirely destroyed, and he now found himself without a job, homeless and with no family. He had a great horror of the idea of going to the Leghorn hospital, and thought the best thing was to die. As I was the only person who could manage him at all, I felt it my duty not to desert him. So I promised that if he would try to brace up and start life again, I would not let him go to the hospital, but would take him back to Rome with me. And so I arrived at Palazzo Caetani escorting my school-

master in an ambulance, and put him to bed in our spare room.

So far my tale has been tragic, but now the comic relief begins. Our refugee settled himself on the second floor of the Palazzo as the baby cuckoo makes his home in some other bird's nest, and we felt we had him for the rest of our lives. Nothing we did for him satisfied him. The clothes and linen I bought were never right, and he was offended if we sent him out for a drive in a cab and did not offer him daily our one and only motor car. On cold days he preferred not getting up at all, and desired his meals to be served in bed. He gave orders to the servants, and never troubled in the least to find out whether his wife and children's corpses had ever been found. What really interested him was to know that Sizy was a widow. He had studied our household carefully from the first day, and had very soon discovered that she was "the power behind the throne." He considered her even more than that: the Queen herself! and had formed a deep plan: he would marry this queen and become the Prince Consort and live forever in comfort in Palazzo Caetani.

I never quite understood what style his love-making took, for Sizy was more profuse in her snorts than in her details, but she refused to look after the "Professore," as the servants called him, any more, at least without a chaperon, even after my taunt: "An active woman like you ought to be able to get away from a man with a sprained ankle and a broken arm!"

Unfortunately the broken arm had been neglected on the hospital ship, and I had to have it re-set for him in Rome, so until it was properly mended we were all obliged for conscience' sake to put up with the Professore.

But one happy day he finally realized that there was nothing doing with Sizy, and suddenly felt a bit homesick for Sicily. He then admitted that he had a mother, whom he had never referred to, living somewhere, and that he would like to join her. Some of my friends—Wilfred Ashley, among others—had been most generous to him with gifts of money, so we sewed it all up in the inside pocket of his overcoat, bought his ticket, packed a little bag for him and escorted him joyfully to the station. He wrote a very grateful "bread and butter" letter, poor man, but after that we heard of him no more.

In the winter of 1915 I saw the consequences of another terrible earthquake, this time much nearer Rome, in the Abbruzzi. The shock was very severely felt also in Rome and woke us all up at eight in the morning. The chandelier hanging from my ceiling swung wildly to and fro while the walls of the room creaked and groaned in the most ominous way. I felt that with one swing more something must give way, and cowered in my bed, waiting for the crash which luckily did not come. The damage done in Rome was insignificant: a few more cracks in houses that have already many caused by past earthquakes. One of the huge statues on the top of the Church of St. John the Lateran crashed on to the steps below, fortunately without hurting any one.

In the course of the day news came through that the shock had been terrible in the Abbruzzi, and the town of Avezzano and several surrounding villages were utterly destroyed. So rescue work was hastily organized, this time by train and automobile, and next evening I left for the scene of the disaster with my friend, Mrs. ver Mehr, who was staying with me at the time, my brother-

in-law Gelasio Caetani, and a medical student Giorgio Ferrero, a capital youth who was anxious to be useful. We started in two automobiles, taking with us a supply of bandages, disinfectants, and condensed food. We traveled all night; men carrying spades tried to stop us, shouting that they wanted a lift to Avezzano where they were going to dig out the dead. But they looked a rough lot and loot was probably their object, so we did not stop. We picked up two decent looking men who were tramping on the road; they were red-eyed and haggard with anxiety, and told us their parents lived at Avezzano. At dawn we reached what had been the principal town in the Abbruzzi; and found it even more completely destroyed than Messina had been a few years before. There a few façades remained, while here every house had become a vast rubbish heap. Some looked like gigantic pincushions, with beams sticking out in every direction.

We found plenty to do among the wounded who were being extricated from the ruins on every side, and worked all day long, spending the night in the cars. Then a boy came up to me and said: "Oh, please, won't you go to Ortucchio and take me with you? I have a married sister who lives there, and no one is troubling about the place." Meanwhile relief workers were beginning to pour into Avezzano on all sides, so we decided to push on to Ortucchio, taking the boy with us.

We met two doctors who were in despair because their medical outfit had been lost in the confusion, and they could do no work owing to lack of materials. So we put all we had with us at their disposal and they joined our party, which was a very good arrangement because they were able to help the wounded better than we could.

The boy showed us the way and we drove through the beautiful Abbruzzi scenery, occasionally passing ruined farmhouses from which large white dogs, already savage with hunger, bayed at us. Peasants shouted and signaled to us as we passed, but our guide implored us not to stop, as relief was needed everywhere and he was wild to get to Ortucchio where he knew no help had yet arrived. In fact when we reached its ruins we found we were the first, except for the soldiers who had already been digging out the wounded for two days.

We established ourselves on what had been the village piazza, placing the car and our belongings in the middle and roping off a square all round. Then we told the people to bring us their wounded.

I thought my experiences on the hospital ship at Messina had hardened me to the sight of horrors, but the state of the wounded at Ortucchio surpassed anything I had ever seen. There was no one there but ourselves to look after them; the two doctors and Ferrero worked unceasingly, Mrs. ver Mehr and I acting as their assistants, while my brother-in-law Gelasio organized the removal of the wounded by ox-carts to the nearest station, and drove as many victims as he could himself in one of the automobiles. The soldiers were still digging poor wretches out of the ruins, and those who were still alive were brought to us in an endless procession and were passed in turn into our roped-off square.

The village priest, who was unhurt, did all in his power to help, and worked hard all the time. The poor little man was pea-green in the face, and had tied a bright pink scarf embroidered with red roses round his neck above his dusty cassock, as his teeth were chattering in the cold

wind. A fine old peasant woman appointed herself at once as one of the staff and took up her place at our side in the reserved square. She knew all the wounded personally and spoke encouraging words to them in their own patois, if they were conscious; she chose the worst cases that needed immediate attention, and made herself most useful in an intelligent way. I saw her carefully wrapping up another old woman who was badly hurt, and I asked her if she was a friend of hers.

"Certainly not!" she answered decidedly. "She's the worst gossip in the village. I can't abide her!" And she continued to wrap her up tenderly.

A soldier called me down to the ruins of a house in which they were working because they had just come across a man who was still alive. This was on the *fifth* day after the earthquake. When I got there only his back was visible as yet, so coated in dust I thought it was a large stone; but one could see it moving with his breathing. They managed to free his head and his poor gray face appeared with staring eyes and mouth full of plaster. I cleaned it out as best I could and gave him water to drink. They eventually excavated him completely and laid him on the ground, under a sort of shelter they made with sacking. Soon afterwards the soldiers dug out two of his children, a boy and girl who were still alive, and they were placed near him. The wife and four other children were killed. The little girl was obviously dying, and very scantily clothed. A tramontana wind was blowing, and the wounded suffered terribly from cold. Somebody found the scarlet flag of the socialistic party of Ortucchio, and we wrapped the poor child in it. A woman came along and asked if she could have her boots

for her own child who was barefooted and crying. "Of course," she said, quite nicely, "I will wait till the *povera creatura* is dead." So she sat on the ground near the poor little scarlet bundle, and waited for the end which came very soon.

The little boy and his father spent the night under the shelter, and next day were sent off in an ox cart to the nearest station. The man was conscious and gave me his name and I promised I would look him up afterwards in Rome.

After a good deal of hunting about, three weeks later, I eventually found the boy in one of the Roman hospitals; his leg had been amputated, but he was recovering. But the man had utterly vanished, and I was never able to trace him. The boy could not tell what happened to his father, he thought the soldiers had taken him out of the train on the way to Rome, so he must have died on the journey.

We worked for three days at Ortucchio from early morning till late in the evening. The boy who had guided us there had found his sister dead under the ruins of her house. "It was an ugly sight," he said, and gave no further details. But he tried to pull himself together and help us as best he could. We slept at night in a wooden hut a little way out of the village, in the open country. Owing to its elasticity it had remained curiously intact in the midst of such universal devastation, and we were very lucky to find it. We spread hay on the floor, and hung up a rug which served as a partition between the sleeping quarters of the men and mine with Mrs. ver Mehr. Our party was increased by the arrival of some more men and Prince Borghese, who made innu-

merable journeys back and forth to Rome in his racing car, bringing useful supplies, so I think that on the men's side of the rug there were at least fourteen sleepers in the hay, and we two poor women could not close an eye because of the snoring! And as comedy is always mixed up with tragedy in real life, I must tell of one doctor who had the most alarming snore I have ever heard; it was positively like a railway whistle!

When, during the War, my husband was sent to an observation post amidst the snow and ice of a high Alpine peak, a fellow officer shared his solitude in the wooden hut, and kept him awake all night by his incredible snoring. This aroused some faint memory in my husband, but he couldn't place it at all. Then while talking together, during their long lonely days, about many past experiences, the other man mentioned the Avezzano earthquake. This was a flash of light for my husband, and the description I had given him came back to his mind.

"I know now!" he exclaimed, "you are the man who slept in the same hut with my wife, and you also kept her awake with your snores."

And he was!

Afterwards other help arrived at Ortucchio and the wounded were all got away little by little. Mrs. ver Mehr and I returned to Rome and took up work in the Red Cross hospital, while Gelasio remained on the devastated country another week and did a lot of useful transport work with his automobile.

And now, after these two ghastly experiences, I must confess that the thing I am most frightened of in the

world is an earthquake. I have seen too much of its results. We often have slight shocks in Italy, and at the smallest tremor my heart thumps, and I am paralyzed with fright. There is nothing to be done, unless one is on the ground floor near an open door. But in a large house, where the getting downstairs takes several seconds, it is not worth while even trying to escape. Personally, if an earthquake occurred at night I would never attempt to get up. At Messina I saw many people owed their lives to having stayed in bed. If the floor gives way you go down lying on your mattress which breaks the fall, and the only thing to do is to bury your head under the pillow and hope for the best!

CHAPTER XIV

1914-1918

IN my opinion there was a great change in London society between the first years when I knew it, that is, about 1903, and the last season I saw before the War—in 1913.

For ten years I went over every summer for a couple of months of London life, and at the end of that time I found many things had altered. King Edward's death had made an enormous difference, as all the dinners and country house parties given for his amusement and which lent such *chic* to English life were very much missed.

King George, courteous and pleasant to all and admirable in every way, did not care for society in the same manner as his illustrious father; and Queen Mary, that perfect embodiment of English charm, was also completely absorbed in the serious duties of her position. The private entertainments they honored with their presence were consequently fewer and much more formal. Besides this, so many of the great houses which were still open during those first years, had already closed their doors forever.

Stafford House, in which as a child of sixteen I had my first vision of a London ball, had already passed out of the hands of the Duke of Sutherland and become a museum. Grosvenor House was still standing, but was shuttered and barred, awaiting the destructive pick-ax that was soon to raze it to the ground, and if the "Blue Boy"

had not already departed for California, at least the day of his exile was growing very near. Dorchester House I had seen for several years occupied by the American Ambassador, Mr. Whitelaw Reid, who gave splendid fêtes in that admirable setting, and with his departure that unique mansion was also shut up. Devonshire House also closed its celebrated iron gates, whilst waiting for the inevitable pick-ax.

In 1913, dancing in hotels—the first step towards night clubs—became the fashion, and I remember a good many parties were given at the Cecil and the Savoy, while the Ritz was always crowded at lunch and dinner time with well-known people, who found it more amusing than entertaining in private houses. Cocktails were beginning to make their appearance. It was all very gay, but different from what I had first known.

When the summer of 1914 came I missed the London season for the first time since my marriage, though there was no whisper yet of war. But I felt rather tired of it all somehow, and stayed on and on in Rome through the hot months, busy painting. My husband and I decided to take a cottage somewhere in England for August and September, and I was corresponding with an agent about it and trying to find a place with plenty of subjects for sketching. Meanwhile I took some rooms in an old ex-convent on the summit of Monte Cavo in the Alban hills and stayed there with my boy, my husband now and then coming up from Rome to visit us for a few days.

When the petrifying news of the declaration of war came, I was there, with no one to speak to, and the only information I could get arrived through the somewhat meager Roman daily paper, carried on foot up the hill

at the close of day. Events seemed to precipitate with stunning rapidity, and I thought the world had gone mad. I flew down to Rome, as the suspense was unbearable, and there at least I found many people to discuss things with. Of course all idea of going to England was now out of the question, and yet I longed passionately to be there. All through those first months of the War I stayed in Rome, and it was a dreadful time. Those first casualty lists contained the names of most of my men friends in London, and so many of the people I cared for were in desperate trouble. Apart from my anxiety, life was not pleasant because so many round me were pro-German and their sympathies all on the side of the Huns. This was unbearable for me, as heart and soul I was for England, and in consequence there were friends and acquaintances I preferred to avoid.

Fortunately the Caetani family was pro-Ally, otherwise I don't know what I should have done. My sister-in-law, who was married to a Belgian diplomatist, Baron Grenier, was staying in the Palazzo, and my mother-in-law being English all the sympathies were therefore on the same side. The Caetani were all very anxious for Italy to enter the War, and that was a painful subject of discussion in Rome where a good many—fortunately not the best element—wanted neutrality at any price.

It was during this first troubled summer that Pope Piux X died, and this created a little diversion from our anxious thoughts. My sister came from Siena to stay with me, and we went daily to Piazza San Pietro to see the traditional *fumata.* The whole immense square was densely packed with people, all anxiously watching a certain chimney of the Vatican on the right hand side of

the façade of St. Peters. At the end of the daily sitting of the Conclave, if the Cardinals have not yet come to a decision, white smoke issues from the chimney pot and, on the other hand, if the Pope has been elected, dense black fumes roll out. This is the traditional signal to the populace of Rome, which has been used for centuries, and it is made by adding damp straw to the voting papers that are burnt at the end of the meeting of the Cardinals.

We found many friends among the crowd on those broiling August mornings, as nearly every one remained in Rome that summer, and we also met German and Austrian diplomatists whom we studiously avoided.

After we had been two or three mornings in succession to Piazza San Pietro and stood about patiently waiting, we were rewarded by seeing volumes of inky smoke pouring from the traditional chimney pot, instead of the thin white spiral of past days. Immediately a roar went up from the vast crowd: *"Il Papa è fatto!"* ("The Pope is made!")—words that the Roman populace has shouted at each Papal election since the Middle Ages—and on all sides one could hear speculations as to which Cardinal had been elected and what name he would assume. Then the great doors of St. Peter's, which up to then had been closed, were thrown wide open, and the crowd made one rush to get into the Basilica and have a first sight of the new Pope. There was nothing to be done but to rush, too, so my sister and I fled, holding each other by the hand and trusting not to trip and fall. Nervousness gave us unexpected agility and we went up the interminable steps of the church and in at the main entrance with the best of them. In an instant St. Peter's was packed, but

we found a good strategic position perched near the gigantic cherubs of the holy-water stoup.

It is curious how quickly rumor spread; in an instant everybody knew that Cardinal della Chiesa had been elected and that he would be known as Benedict XV. All eyes were fixed on the balcony on which he was to appear and give his blessing to the crowd, but there was a long delay for which rather a curious reason was given to me afterwards by a Vatican official. As soon as the Pope is elected he retires to don the white cassock that only the Holy Father is entitled to wear and it is customary to prepare three cassocks of varying sizes, so that whichever Cardinal is chosen there will be something ready to fit him. But Benedict XV was so short and misshapen that even the smallest of the three cassocks would not do at all, so a good deal of time had to be lost turning up the hem and pinning up the sleeves before he could possibly appear on the balcony in the church of St. Peter's to bless the faithful!

In olden times the newly elected Pope always appeared on the *outer* balcony, over the main entrance of the church, and blessed the multitudes on the Piazza, but the order of things was changed when in 1870 Italy became a United Kingdom, and the Pope was deprived of his temporal power.

However, in 1922, when Benedict XV died and the present Pope Pius XI was elected in his stead, the old tradition was reverted to, and, standing once more on the Piazza San Pietro, I saw the lonely white figure appear on the huge central balcony of the largest church in the world. It was a very impressive sight, as all the troops and carabineers present had received orders also to kneel

for the blessing—an act of courtesy from the Government —thus demonstrating the *rapprochement* that has taken place between the Church and the State.

In the autumn I finally left Rome to visit my mother who had a villa on Lago Maggiore, and fell under the charm of the exquisite little island near Pallanza, called L'Isolino, which belongs to Principe Borromeo. It had been rented by Comte Metternich, former German Ambassador to London, but he evidently knew that there would soon be war also between Italy and Germany for he readily consented to give up his lease and I rented the Isolino for twelve years. It proved a haven of peace during the time that followed, when my anxiety about the War and private troubles of my own would have made life unendurable anywhere else. My mother made me a generous gift of money with which I was able to make the Isolino habitable by putting in two bathrooms, and doing up the house with a few bits of charming old Italian furniture, colored linens, and many books and flowers. I spent all my summers there during the next years.

But I saw my beloved England again before my own country was also engulfed in the Great War. In the spring of 1915, when it was evidently a question of weeks before Italy would come in, I felt I simply must see London once more before what would probably be a separation of some years. My friend, Mrs. ver Mehr, who was staying with me wished to go too, and as Mrs. Ronald Greville had asked me to stay with her in Charles Street, we started together, maidless, and carrying our own suitcases. The journey, once so comfortable and easy, was now full of difficulties. In Paris, at the Gare du

Nord, the Commissaire de Police was very disagreeable and tried to prevent our proceeding, as our passports had not been viséd by the British Consul in Paris, which had been impossible as we were traveling straight through. As he was not able to put us off, he then said that he would *visé* them as far as Boulogne, but that we should have trouble with the British authorities there, and certainly would never be able to get to England. I became very cross and said that as soon as I got into touch with the British authorities I knew I would be all right. He sneered and answered: "Je vous le souhaite, Madame!"

As it happened I was correct in my affirmation, as all the English we met were charming to us, and an English officer on his way back from Egypt looked after us all the way, helping to carry our things and giving us tea and dinner. Our passports were easily put in order at Boulogne, and we crossed the Channel at full steam escorted by torpedo boats. The only thing to be said in favor of traveling in war-time was that the crossing was shorter than in times of peace. At Folkestone all the lights were masked on one side, and London was terribly dark; one had to creep along in the motor car as in a dense fog. All the street lamps wore little bonnets so as not to show any light from above.

Though London seemed to me so changed, it was only a few months after the War had started, and later on all regulations and restrictions became far more stringent. For instance, as soon as I arrived I went to dine with Sir Ernest Cassel and found Rechid Saadi bey, a Turk who had been a diplomatist, and who was an old friend of mine, but whom, I confess, I was rather surprised to meet at a London dinner party in war-time. He ex-

plained to me that the English were not very down on the Turks and that, except for not being able to move more than five miles without informing the police, he was free to do as he liked. But later on poor Rechid Saadi bey was clapped into a concentration camp, and when I met him after the War somewhere in Rome, he was full of the hardships he had undergone there.

The day after I arrived in London Winston Churchill came to dine and in a letter to my husband, dated March 29, 1915, I gave him this account of our conversation:

Well, I think Winston came to dinner really to talk to me, for he began at once about Italy, and said it would be *disastrous* for her to hang back any more, that she simply *must* come in immediately.

I said: "That's all very well, but give us the *reason* for coming in."

He answered: "Damn the reason! Fly at their throats! But if you want a reason, the way they treat the Italians at Trieste is plenty. Telegraph to your country to-morrow, and tell them to come in before it is too late, for their sakes."

So I said I'd write if it would pass the censor, which he said it would. He was very earnest on the subject and kept returning to it again and again, and had a very good quotation from Julius Cæsar, applicable to the situation, which at the last moment he returned to repeat to me once more. He had to leave early, and he left me with Lord Crewe, who had also dined here, saying: "Now, Crewe, keep her up to the mark. I think I've worked her up, don't let her waver and go back!"

I wished you had been here, it would have been far more important than my presence.

On Wednesday I am lunching with Asquith, and I

suppose it will be the same thing all over again. I have seen Lord Reading [Sir Rufus Isaacs] and Lulu Harcourt, and they all say the same thing. They seem to think I can do something, but I can only tell you and you must pass it on to the right people. . . . All these political men seem to imagine that the War will be over in the autumn, some even talk of *May!* The Dardanelles venture is entirely Winston's. He says it is all plain sailing now (*not* the Dardanelles, but the War)—only a question of *when* the Germans will be licked! They all speak with shudders of the beginning of the War, the retreat from Mons, and they all seem to have thought that England would be invaded. Winston said: "It was touch and go that the whole British Army would be wiped out, but now with three million men ready next summer, it is only a question of how and when we will polish them off."

I am now making arrangements about visiting the big hospitals and some of the private ones; also I am going to meet people who will explain the organization of the Red Cross (in which even here they made big muddles in the beginning), and the way they distribute relief to the soldiers' families. . . .

Jimmy d'Alba came to see me on Saturday. He says in Spain all the damn clericals are pro-German, but all the people with brains, who really count, are on the other side.

I am engaged for every meal this week, in fact I have about three invitations for each one. Ribblesdale is coming to see me to-day, and I am lunching with the Rutlands. . . .

Two days later I wrote again:

I lunched with the Asquiths in Downing Street yesterday: it was most interesting. Lord Morley and Lord

Reading were there; also a man I wanted much to see, Sir Alfred Keogh, who is the head of the Army Medical Corps. I see they have the same friction as we have between the "Sanita Militare" and the "Croce Rossa"; the latter is not popular, even here. . . . I have been to see Aunt E. Really the nonsense old conservative ladies talk makes one ill! She says the Government does not care in the least if the Germans win, now that they have feathered their nest! . . . To return to Asquith, he was very glad to see me, but I think he would have preferred to see you. He sent you so many messages and would have liked a talk with you. He was less emphatic than Winston on the subject of our coming in, but very keen on it too. . . .

These letters were written in English, so as to pass the Censor but through the kindness of a friend I was able to send my husband a few letters written in Italian, as it was in that language we corresponded daily for so many years, whenever we were not together. On looking them over now I see that in one I am rather sarcastic about a certain set in London whom I found still enjoying country house parties, plenty of rich food, motor cars, servants, bridge, and golf. I remarked that they made fun of the women who went in for nursing and knitting, and were only anxious to give the impression that political men confided their secrets to them. I added:

Apparently the great thing is to be in the know. You must criticize Kitchener, say something biting about the French, and declare you are sick of the Belgians. But there are lots of others like Leonie Leslie, Lady Ripon, Mary Crawshay, and Lady Islington, who are working

hard for the cause, but not *all,* as I thought in my innocence before coming over.

This was my impression in 1915, recorded at the time. But I repeat that it was still during the first year of the War, and as time went on even the set I spoke of had to come up to scratch and in any case they were not allowed to go on enjoying the good things of life undisturbed for very much longer.

I was very anxious to see the hospitals in London, because since my experiences in the Italian earthquakes I had become a Red Cross nurse, and was at the moment studying to pass my final examination. I visited the Charing Cross, London and Guy's hospitals, and also Queen Alexandra's Military Hospital. The authorities and nurses were very kind in showing me all the details, and I found everything admirable. Among the private hospitals I saw, Lady Ridley's was one of the best and I was much impressed by it.

After a most interesting six weeks in London under Mrs. Ronald Greville's hospitable roof, I left again for Italy. Soon after I reached Rome we also joined the Great War. Then followed long gray years about which there is nothing very much to say. For everything that can be told about the War has already been said. They were sad and anxious years, for many reasons.

My husband, with his brothers, Livio and Gelasio, volunteered for service. Michelangelo was already an officer, so there were four Caetani brothers in uniform. My husband joined the Artillery and was sent to distant observation posts among the highest peaks of the Alps,

where he did very good work. Gelasio joined the "Genio Minatori," and brought his knowledge of engineering into good use. He eventually acquired a certain fame for blowing up the Col di Lana mountain. Poor Michelangelo had a very hard time all round, and the seeds were sown of the serious illness which has now made him a permanent invalid. Livio joined the Granatieri and went through his training in Rome.

After war was declared I was very ill with asthma and had to leave Rome, where the summer climate has always been fatal to me. I took up my abode on the Isolino and regained my health by leading the quietest of lives on my green island, amidst the blue waters of Lago Maggiore.

When the news reached me that my husband—who also had been training in Rome—was to leave for the front, I made a dash for Padua where I met him and a few brother officers, among others Salvago Raggi, who was later on Italian Ambassador in Paris. I accompanied them as far as Belluno, and there the General in command was very kind and gave me permission to go on to Calalzo with my husband, on condition that I returned to Belluno the same night. Calalzo was very near the front; we got a lift there in somebody's motor car and passed endless troops and guns on the road, all squashing through the mud. In the little wooden hotel, which had been an Alpine resort in happier days, we found the military authorities on whom my husband depended, and he was told to wait until next morning when he and his brother officers would get a lift on a lorry to their battery in the mountains. By then it was already dark, and I was preparing rather sadly to go back to Belluno alone,

so as to keep my word. But the authorities did not wish me to undertake the long road in the dark, and after some telephoning to Belluno I also was allowed to spend the night in the wooden hotel of Calalzo. To my joy I found my Aunt Mary, wife of Prospero Colonna, was also staying there, as she had been sent by a committee to distribute comforts to the soldiers, so she lent me a necessary nightgown and hair brush! Next morning I saw my husband pack into a lorry with a lot of other men, and feeling very lonely I found my way back to Belluno and eventually to the Isolino.

Later in the autumn of the same year I managed by dint of "wangling" to get to Calalzo again. My journey was rather adventurous, as on the way to Padua we had a railway accident. It was already dark and I was dozing in my seat, the only other occupants of my compartment being a man in plain clothes opposite me and an officer in the far corner. Suddenly there was a violent shock and I was flung forward on to the plain clothes man and bounced off him back on to the floor. All the luggage in the racks was hurled out at the same time, fortunately not colliding with our heads, and the air in the carriage was dense with clouds of dust. My vis-à-vis completely lost his head and clutched me wildly round the neck as I sat on the floor at his feet, shrieking in my ear: *"Signora! Signora! E successa una disgrazia!"* (An accident has happened.) My one idea was to recover my handbag containing my passport, which had flown under the seat, and I was struggling to disengage myself when the officer came to my rescue and hauled me up, dusted me, and put me back in my seat. We then found out that there had been a collision, and thirty men were injured in the front

carriages, some rather badly. The line was blocked, and it looked as if we would be there all night.

After some time a very young subaltern came along the passage and inquired shyly at the door if there was any one who would like to make up a rubber of bridge, as we would probably be stuck for a long time. I volunteered, and three nice boys came into my compartment where, with a rug over a portmanteau as table, we whiled away most of the night with one rubber after another, and finally got to Padua in the early hours of the morning.

From Calalzo, with the help of kind friends, I was able to reach my husband's battery in the mountains, where there was snow on the ground, and the soldiers were amusing themselves with a mild form of winter sports. I lunched with the officers, and afterwards distributed lots of woolen comforts I had brought with me, to the men.

On my return journey I spent a day at Padua where I found my brother-in-law Livio at the hotel, ill in bed with influenza. His regiment had just been sent to Padua from Rome on its way to the front, and he told me he had caught cold during the night journey, when an icy wind was blowing and he had to get out at several stations to look after his men. I sat near his bed and talked to him for some time, but though he coughed a good deal he did not complain, and did not seem to me to be seriously ill. I then returned to Rome, where I had already taken up my winter quarters. But two days later the news came that Livio had developed pneumonia and that his life was in danger. The Duke and Duchess, my sister-in-law Nella Grenier, and I started for Padua, and

we found poor Livio barely conscious and evidently dying. My husband managed to get leave to come down, and arrived just before the end.

Death is always tragic, but Livio's startled me dreadfully. He was lying quite quietly in bed, breathing heavily and apparently unconscious, when he suddenly sat up with his eyes wide open and a most ghastly look of terror on his face. My husband was leaning over the bed, and Livio clutched him by his uniform belt, exclaiming in a loud voice, "I am dying, Leone, I am dying . . . save me!" He struggled for a few moments like a drowning man, and then fell back dead. I grieved for him very much; he had always been courteous and kind with me and was my favorite brother-in-law. He had lived a curiously retired life and never went into society. He had been in diplomacy, and in his young days was in Pekin at the time of the Boxer Riots, and went through the siege of the legations, where he distinguished himself by his coolness and courage. He was very tall, like all the Caetani, and had a curiously gentle voice. In his later years he had a passion for walking, and toured all Italy on foot, carrying a small black bag in his hand, and traveling preferably at night, as he was a poor sleeper.

During the winter that followed I lived quietly at the Palazzo Caetani, working daily at the Military Hospital of St. Celio, where I saw many sad sights and heard many tales of misery. My father-in-law lived in a perpetual state of anxiety about his sons who were at the front and used to wander upstairs to have long talks with me which relieved his feelings. The War was very trying for a man of his age who had no occupations to distract his

mind, and he had nothing to do but discuss politics and worry all day long.

In April, Mrs. Ronald Greville, who was at Monte Carlo, asked me to go to spend a few days with her at the Hotel de Paris; and as I badly needed a brief rest I accepted with pleasure. I wrote to my husband the day after my arrival:

. . . My only traveling companion from Genoa to Monte Carlo was a priest. When first I saw a cassock getting into my compartment I made horns, for priests are very unlucky on a journey, but then as he had a kind and gentle face I began to talk to him and found him very pleasant. He was French, evidently of good family, and told me his mother had a big château near Lille where they lived until the arrival of the Germans. With his brother's help he had buried the family silver in the park and they escaped by motor car in haste, a few minutes before the arrival of the Huns. These occupied the house, taking away all the most valuable things, breaking all the china in the glass cases, making holes in the family pictures, in fact, everything was destroyed. It is only one of the usual stories, we have heard so many of the same kind, but I am always impressed as, selfishly, I try at once to imagine what my feelings would be if all my possessions vanished! In the course of our conversation I mentioned that I was bringing a little gold with me to Monte Carlo, to have a mild flutter at the tables. But my priest warned me that one was no longer allowed to export gold from Italy, and that if it was discovered at the frontier it would be confiscated and I would have to pay an enormous fine. This dismayed me, and I felt *something* must be done. So I shut the door, got the gold out of my hand-bag and tied it up in a handkerchief

which I dropped inside my clothes. But my belt was so loose there was great danger of my little bundle slipping down and falling at the feet of the customs officials just at the critical moment. The priest understood my dilemma and produced an enormous black safety pin with which I was able to secure my hoard quite safely. Only he did not wish me to tell a lie, so, being a real Jesuit, he suggested that I should put a louis in my purse and when I was asked if I had any gold on me I could show it and give it up, thus saving my conscience. I thought it would be uncivil not to do as he said, after his gift of the safety pin, but during half an hour's silent meditation I came to the conclusion that I didn't mind telling that sort of a lie one bit, so I went out into the passage and the solitary louis soon joined his little friends in their hiding place!

But at the customs I had no trouble at all, thanks to the telegram of the French Ambassador and Baslini's letter, as I passed in like a queen and my luggage was not touched. How strange it seemed to arrive at Monte Carlo in an empty train, with only a priest as a traveling companion, and *he* was going on to Marseilles! On all the carriage windows labels were pasted: *"Taisez vous. Méfiez vous. Les oreilles ennemies vous écoutent."*

Seeing this on all sides so impressed me that I found myself asking Gertie in a stage whisper to pass me the New York *Herald!* Here everything is empty and deserted. The beautiful sunshine remains, and the sea and the flowers, but the cosmopolitan crowd of other days has completely disappeared. Nothing has been able entirely to suppress "les cocottines" who with large straw hats, unadorned with the feathers and aigrettes of yore, continue to make goo-goo eyes, more out of habit than for any other motive. The only young men to be seen are convalescent British officers, some on crutches, some

with their arms in slings, all in rather a bad way, poor dears. Otherwise there are only old men. One feels that Monte Carlo now belongs to women, for as officers are not allowed in the Casino or in the Sporting Club, the gamblers are nearly all of the fair sex. I have looked into the Casino just to be able to say I've been there. More tables are going there than I would have expected, but the public is extremely dowdy. At the Sporting Club I saw a few smart cocottes and the survivors of what used to be the Great Gang of Gamblers, but really very few: *"la chose se passe en famille!"*

The Grand Duchess Anastasie dined with Maggie and myself in the restaurant next door to the gambling room. Though she is the mother of the Crown Princess of Germany and related to all these people who are turning Europe upside down at the present moment, she only lives for gambling; she discusses systems with every one, and knows all the croupiers, those who spin well and those who spin badly! After dinner I sat near her at the trente-et-quarante table; on the other side I had a milliner to whom the Grand Duchess owed money, and as the latter was having a run of luck, every time she won she pushed some counters past me to the milliner, as something on account. And now fancy! after all my trouble in bringing a few louis here, I find gold has vanished from the tables and one only gambles with counters made of celluloid! The white ones are worth 5 francs, the pink ones 20 francs, and the larger blue ones 100 francs. Then come the "savonettes," so called because they are oval and orange colored and look like cakes of soap. They are worth 500 francs. After the savonettes come the bigger square counters, dark blue, that are worth 1000 francs. One sees very few of them as no one plays high.

I saw old Brancaccio, jubilant because he had won

22,000 francs before dinner, but he was well on the way to losing it all before going to bed. I found Principessa Rospigliosi wearing, as usual, Maria Mancini's pearl necklace.* which brought a touch of history into this *milieu banal,* and then I heard myself hailed with effusion, and there was the Aga Khan! He asked me: "Where is the Phantom Husband?" He plays the same system every night. First a savonette, then if he loses it he puts on a 1000-franc counter. If he loses both he thinks his luck is out for the evening, and goes off; if he wins he gets a lot, as he lets it all accumulate. Last night he lost both *coups* so it wasn't very thrilling. He seems very much "in the know" about the War, with his pockets full of telegrams. He has made himself a great position in England and they say that the King always listens to his advice about Indian affairs. He told me a lot of interesting things, and is not very optimistic about the War. He says: "Germany won't win," but that is all.

The people in the Sporting Club remind me of the yellow and unappetizing scum on the surface of the puddles left behind the rocks on the beach. In it are lots of bubbles that chase each other and look very busy and probably think themselves very important whilst really they don't matter at all, and not far off is the sea, immense and clean and beautiful, steadily doing her work. . . . From my open window I see the blue Mediterranean and I try to forget the War and other troubles, but they come down again like a black curtain after an hour or so of respite. Well, let us hope that *"après la serie noire viendra la serie rouge."* . . .

* As I have already mentioned, in another chapter, this famous string of pearls was given to Maria Mancini by her lover, Louis XIV, at the moment of her leaving France to marry Principe Lorenzo Onofrio Colonna in 1661. It afterwards passed into the Rospigliosi family through a marriage in the eighteenth century.

The following winter we had no men servants left at all, and it was impossible to get enough coal to heat our rooms sufficiently. Life at Palazzo Caetani consequently became too uncomfortable, and as my husband meanwhile had been sent back to Rome we decided to take rooms for ourselves and our son at the Grand Hotel, and spend the winter there, which we did. I was often ill during those months, and my husband was sent on a mission to London and was away a good deal. The old Duke was breaking up, and I had frequently to visit him down at Palazzo Caetani that, with the War, seemed to have got darker and drearier than ever; so altogether it was a very gloomy winter, followed by another summer of solitude and anxiety on the Isolino.

No wonder they are years that I do not care to recall!

CHAPTER XV

COLONNA AND CAETANI

I HAVE referred so often to the deadly feud that existed for so many centuries between my family, the Colonnas, and the one I married into, the Caetanis, that I feel I must give a brief account of how it all began. Except for the Orsinis, who still exist, all the other old Roman families of feudal times are extinct, including the Frangipani, Pierleoni, Savelli, and Tusculani.

The first Colonna of whom documentary records exist is Petrus de Colonna, who lived in the eleventh century and who was the founder of our family.

The Caetanis claim their descent from a certain Count Anatalio of unknown origin who at the beginning of the ninth century became Signore di Gaeta, and whose descendants adopted the title of Dukes of Gaeta, and reigned in that town for about two centuries. Their family name became Gaetani.

In the Caetani archives is an almost contemporary copy of the will of Docibile, Duke of Gaeta, dated 934, in which he gives freedom to over a hundred of his servants and their families—they were really slaves—and allows them to keep their belongings. But already in the early thirteenth century there were many branches of the Gaetani family distributed all over Italy: in Pisa, Florence, Naples, and even Sicily.

The Caetani of Anagni, Rome, and Sermoneta have always spelt their name with a C.

I am not proposing to write the family history: it is being admirably done by my brother-in-law, Gelasio Caetani, who has already published two fat volumes, but I will briefly tell how our great feud began.

Benedetto Caetani, born at Anagni in 1230, became Pope Boniface VIII, and it is from his brother, Roffredo, who married Elisabetta Orsini, that the present branch of Caetani di Sermoneta descends.

Boniface VIII was one of the most remarkable characters of history. He began his reign with many good intentions towards the Church, but two devouring ambitions gradually stifled all others in his life. He longed completely to crush the power of the Colonnas and to create a real dominion for his family in Central Italy. At the very beginning of his career he was on good terms with the Colonnas and even visited them in their Castle of Zagarolo. Then something occurred that would certainly prove trying to the firmest of friendships.

On the third of May in the year 1297 a long caravan of eighty mules was wending its way from Anagni to Rome, under the escort of many soldiers, commanded by the Pope's nephew, Pietro Caetani. The mules were laden with sacks of money, gold and silver vases, and other valuables, that were to serve as payment for the great Castle of Sermoneta which the Pope had just purchased from the Anibaldi family.

When on the Albano road, and only a few miles from Rome, the caravan fell into an ambush laid by young Sciarra Colonna, who at the head of his men attacked Pietro Caetani and routed all those of his escort who were not killed, after which he gleefully drove the mules and

My ancestress, Vittoria Colonna,
who was a celebrated poetess and a great friend
of Michelangelo

This portrait by Muziano, that hangs in the Colonna picture gallery, is supposedly the only authentic one of her in existence

their precious baggage to the distant Colonna fortress at Palestrina.

I must say that I quite understand that the Pope was upset! He was indeed absolutely furious when the news was brought to him and sent for the two Colonna Cardinals, Giacomo and Piero, to tell them exactly what he thought of their nephew Sciarra. Even the Cardinals had to admit that his conduct had been pretty bad, and the treasure was promptly returned from Palestrina. But the Pope, unappeased, wanted further satisfaction. He demanded that the fortress of Palestrina should be handed over to him as compensation for the act of rebellion made to the Church.

The Colonna Cardinals did not see the point of this at all. The Pope, still blind with fury, thought it a very suitable moment to find out what he was always anxious to know, namely, whether the Colonnas recognized him as legitimate Pontiff. He asked them the question point blank, ordering them at the same time to pay him homage. The two Cardinals silently and scornfully withdrew.

That night they and other members of the Colonna family met in the house of Pietro Conti. Jacopone da Todi, the famous fanatical preacher and poet, who was a deadly enemy of the Pope, was also present. They all solemnly declared that they did not recognize Boniface VIII as legitimate Pontiff, alleging that Celestine V had no right to have abdicated. A long document stating all this and much more besides, and appealing to all Christendom, was forthwith drawn up on parchment, sealed by the Colonnas, and deposited as a challenge on the altar of St. Peter's.

And that was how our great family feud began!

Boniface VIII was pitiless. He excommunicated the Cardinals; he gave out that whoever killed a Colonna would receive a prize in money; he ordered Giovanna Colonna, the pious Mother Abbess of San Silvestro in Capite, to give up her charge, and then he had a most brilliant idea! He kept all the Colonna women prisoners in the Colonna stronghold in Rome, while the men of the family were forbidden to enter the town, even during the *Anno Santo,* or Holy Year, when pilgrims flocked to Rome to gain indulgences. By that means he hoped in the course of years to exterminate the hated family!

After all this, it was certainly annoying when his spies informed him that Agapito Colonna's young wife, Mabilia Savelli, was expecting a baby. Braving all dangers her husband had managed to visit her, disguised as a pilgrim, during all the confusion of the *Anno Santo.*

The Pope sent for Donna Mabilia and thundered at her from his throne:

"Rea femmina meretrice, di cui sei tu pregna?" Which means, more or less, "Who is the villain?" The poor young woman was in a great fix. She could not betray her husband, and on the other hand she did not wish her honor to be stained.

"Holy Father," she answered, with cunning, "I am young and have been without a man for a very long time because you will not allow my husband to come to me nor suffer me to go to him. A pilgrim passed our house the other day with his staff and satchel and he so resembled my husband that I asked him to come in, and he reminded me so of my dear one that I slept with him.

And, as you wish to know, it is he who is the father of my child."

Boniface VIII saw through her answer, but appreciated her pluck and ready wit; so he burst into a great laugh and told her to "depart with God." But he did not cease for all that to dominate and persecute all the Colonnas, and the fierce war, which was to last for twenty-four years, went on without any interruption.

Nepi and other Colonna strongholds were taken, the fortress of the town of Colonna itself surrendered in April, 1298, and later on Zagarolo also fell. Last of all, proud Palestrina, the nest of all those fierce eaglets, fell too. The town suffered the same fate as Carthage, for the revengeful Pope ordered it to be razed to the ground and the plow passed over it, while salt was scattered on the soil. Fine palaces and churches, art treasures and many memories of a glorious and remote past were destroyed, for Palestrina was the Prenestina of Julius Cæsar's time, and the remains of his great palace were still to be seen there, shaped like the letter C, with marble staircases and gigantic walls.*

The Caetani Pope had won, and the Colonnas were defeated. Their lands were distributed to all their worst enemies, the Orsinis, the Contis, and other Barons of the Campagna. Boniface VIII was too clever to give any of these lands to his family. He knew that after his death it would be an easy matter for the Colonnas to claim them again, and he wanted the rights of his family to be very firmly established in their possessions. He paid good

*In fact, we Colonna claim to descend from the great Roman Emperor, as we believe to have owned his property without interruption ever since his day, but of course there is no documentary evidence to prove it.

prices in ready money—often, it is true, provided by the coffers of the Church—for all the land and the Castles he bought; and he had all the deeds carefully drawn up. He possessed a powerful legal mind, and all the parchments relating to his purchases are still preserved in the Caetani Archives. Gelasio Caetani, who has studied them deeply, says that no other family in Italy has such strong documentary evidence of its possessions.

I have already said that Boniface VIII's second devouring ambition was to form a large domain for his family in Central Italy. He dreamed of extending the Caetani state northwards as far as Tuscany and down towards Naples in the south. He began by purchasing large tracts of land round his native Anagni, and many castles and farms in the Campagna and round about the Lepini mountains.

With the Castle of Sermoneta—which in a way was the beginning of our family feud, the treasure intended for its payment having been looted by young Sciarra Colonna—Boniface also bought all the rest of the Anibaldi property, which included the other castles of Bassiano and San Donato, Cisterna, Ninfa, all the land that lay along the Appian Way towards Sezze, and on the other side of the road, towards the sea, the great marshes of Fogliano, with the lakes of Caprolace and Paola, and the endless forest that spread to the foot of Monte Circeo, the legendary home of Circe.

Gelasio Caetani calculates that the sum spent by his great ancestor upon all this land corresponds to 140,000,000 lire at their present-day value, that is, about £1,500,000.

To return to the family feud: defeat was never permanent in those days, and the Colonnas soon raised their heads again. Their chance came when Boniface VIII fell out with the French King, Philippe le Bel. After an exchange of fierce arguments, threats, and insults, Philippe finally sent his faithful subject, Guillaume de Nogaret, to Italy with a few followers, with the instruction to *silence the Pope* in the way he thought best. Apparently they started without a fixed plan, except that of getting into touch with the Pope's enemies. And among these, who could be more deadly and more powerful than the Colonnas?

On the night of the sixth and seventh of September, 1303, a cavalcade of several hundred men moved stealthily across the plains towards the hill on which rose the town of Anagni. It was led by Guillaume de Nogaret and Sciarra Colonna, the latter burning to avenge the insults and wrongs heaped upon his family by the Caetani Pope. They reached Anagni in the gray light of dawn, and traitors having left the gates of the town ajar the riders swept into the sleeping town to the ringing cry of: *"Viva il Re di Francia e i Colonna!"*

History tells of the fierce fighting that took place in the narrow streets, the courts, the orchards and little gardens that formed a maze within the heart of Anagni, till the invaders reached the palace of the Pope and the struggle went on in the great rooms and along the passages. When the last defender of the Caetanis fell, the Colonnas burst open the door of the great hall and there sat Boniface VIII on his throne. He had donned all his rich vestments and crowned himself with the papal tiara.

And there, clasping the keys of St. Peter's in his hand, he calmly awaited his enemies.

He spoke no word, so says the old chronicle, when Sciarra Colonna strode up to him and struck him on the face, bitterly reproaching him for the ruin of the Colonna family.

Anagni was sacked for three days, during which time the Pope sat immovable, guarded by soldiers, and refusing all food and drink. Then came another turn of fortune's wheel: one of the Caetanis had managed to escape during the fighting, and riding helter-skelter down the hill to the plains beyond, had rallied other members of the family and their adherents. Once more a cavalcade came thundering up to Anagni, and the population, rather ashamed of what had occurred, sided with the newcomers. This time Sciarra Colonna, de Nogaret and their followers were obliged to escape: Anagni was once more in the hands of the Caetani. The doors of the palace opened, the old Pope appeared, livid with the humiliation and sufferings he had undergone, and accepted an offering of bread and wine from the women of the town.

On the fourteenth of September in the same year Boniface VIII returned to Rome again, well protected by a mounted guard, but the strain had proved too much for him and he was already a doomed man and smitten with a painful illness. The old chronicle tells of how his cries of anguish re-echoed "as the roars of a dying lion" throughout the halls of the Vatican, and on the eleventh of October, 1303, he breathed his last.

The war between the Colonnas and the Caetanis went on more fiercely than ever, and lasted without any respite

for twenty-four years. With the death of the Pope the power of his family was now lessened, and they were attacked on all sides by the Colonnas, losing several castles and valuable lands. The new Pope Benedict XI tried to be impartial between the two families, and to restore to each its legal possessions, but his reign was a brief one and he was soon succeeded by Clement V, an adherent of the French King Philippe le Bel, who openly favored the Colonnas so that the Caetanis had to fly from Rome and hide in their distant fortresses. But their position was still very strong as the great bulk of their land was always in their hands, including Anagni, the base of all their operations. And so the two families fought with varying luck until 1320 when Pope John XXII, in despair at the disorder and damage they caused to the province of Rome, insisted on their signing a two years' truce, and foxily inserted a clause that they were not to start offending each other again as soon as the truce was over.

But it was of no avail: after a short interval they all began fighting again as bitterly as ever. Those I am really sorry for are the women of our families during those times!

Finally it was King Robert of Anjou, Robert the Wise, who, on the twenty-fourth of March, 1327, in Naples, acted as arbitrator between our terrible ancestors and settled various difficult questions. Peace was never very secure and for many centuries quarrels still flared up again on the smallest provocation, even after periods of several years of peace.

I am afraid the Colonnas were always the fiercest of the lot, for Petrarch, who was their friend, says:

Orsi, lupi, leoni, aquile e serpi
Ad una gran marmorea colonna
*Fanno noia sovente, ed a se damno.**

Which is a polite way of saying that the Colonnas did not get on with any of their neighbors.

In spite of so much hatred, there were occasional marriages between the two families. It seems extraordinary that Stefanello Colonna, great-nephew of the famous Sciarra whose name must have been anathema to all the Caetanis, actually married Sancia Caetani in 1355, barely fifty years after the great scandal of Anagni. In consequence of this, their two sons Giovanni and Nicola were friendly enough with Onorato Caetani, Count of Fondi, who was their uncle, to plot with him against the anti-Pope Boniface IX who lived in Rome while Pope Benedict XIII reigned at Avignon, and their motive was to put an end to the great Schism.

A chronicle in the Caetani Archives tells of how on the night of the fifteenth of January, 1400, the conspirators entered Rome by the Piazza del Popolo with a small following of soldiers and made their way to the Capitol, where they hoped by ringing the great bell to call the population to arms, and how they went from house to house summoning those on whom they thought they could rely. But the Romans hung back, and dawn broke before any had bestirred themselves, so the Colonnas and Caetanis fled from Rome with their followers. They were pursued by the anti-Pope's soldiers who took thirty-one prisoners and these were cruelly put to death. It is

* Bears, wolves, lions, eagles and snakes, often give trouble to a great marble column, but in doing so harm themselves.

characteristic of the times that, as the hangman was not to be found, the youngest prisoner was promised his life if he would execute all the others. He hesitated, as the group of prisoners included his own father and brother, but these encouraged him, saying that it was better that at least one of them should survive, so he pulled himself together and hanged the lot!

The Colonna brothers were excommunicated and eventually pardoned, but Onorato Caetani, abandoned by his followers and surrounded by enemies, was obliged to submit himself to the anti-Pope and returned all the properties of the Church that he had confiscated; and he died soon afterwards of a broken heart.

The Schism of Avignon ended with the election of the great Colonna Pope Martin V, in 1417, who finally brought the Holy See back to Rome, and about that time his brother, Lorenzo Colonna, married Sveva Caetani.

The Colonnas and the Caetanis joined forces again in 1431 when Martin V died and they immediately fell out with his successor, Eugenius IV. Antonio Colonna, Prince of Salerno, refused to hand him over the Papal treasure, having probably got accustomed to considering it as a family possession, and his uncles, Ruggero and Francesco Caetani, backed him up. There was a grand mix-up and much fighting in the streets of long-suffering Rome, while the Pope and his Cardinals fled from the town; but in the end the rebels got the worst of it, and excommunications and confiscations of property rained upon them. After a year or two, however, all was forgiven and apparently forgotten; in those times Popes and

Kings found it simpler to be friends with our ancestors: it saved a lot of trouble!

In 1453, the Colonnas and Caetanis fell out again, over a purely family affair. The same Antonio Colonna, Principe di Salerno, who was the son of Sveva Caetani and the late Lorenzo Colonna, quarreled with his first cousin, Onorato Caetani, over the fishing rights along the coast from Astura to Circeo. As it was a private matter they decided to leave it in the hands of Sveva, who was mother of one and aunt of the other, and abide by her decision. For over a year the old lady was obliged to hear innumerable witnesses called from every part of the coast from Gaeta to Nettuno; and the hundreds of documents relating to the fishing rights that were sent to her by the Caetanis are now kept in the Colonna archives.

At last on the eighth of November, 1453, Sveva pronounced her judgment. Onorato Caetani was to have his fishing rights as far as the lakes of Fogliano and Caprolace were concerned, but the jurisdiction of the sand dunes from Astura to Circeo was to be the right of Astura, and therefore belong to her son Antonio Colonna.

Onorato Caetani was perfectly furious when the judgment was made known to him, and wrote a fiery letter to his aunt in the odd mixture of Latin and Italian which was the literary language of the time, which lost none of its harshness by beginning:

"Excellent and powerful Lady, that I revere as a Mother!" He follows it up by saying:

This evening I have received a copy of the judgment given by your Ladyship on the differences that have

arisen between the Prince and myself, and having studied all its details it seems to us not only beyond all commonsense, but also against all honesty, and I think it will be the cause of yet greater trouble. Where we had hoped that, thanks to your Ladyship's help, there would now be peace, there will be instead the sword, and you will be the cause of it. You have given the Prince much more than he had asked for, and taken from me what was not even under discussion. I will not suffer it. I have been deceived by the faith I had in your Ladyship, for it seemed to me that you were our common Mother, but now I see it is the contrary, and I realize that no love and no charity exists. Nevertheless, I am determined not to lose my own by this. My hopes are in the Holiness of Our Lord Who will permit me to have my rights and not allow them to be taken from me. But I am more wounded by the want of faith than by the loss of this blessed stuff. Always I commend myself to your Ladyship, her reverent nephew and son

HONORATUO GAYTANUS SERMINITI

Sermoneta Nov. 12, 1453.

Quarreling and fighting ensued, with some loss of life between the retainers of both sides, until the matter was finally settled two years later by the Pope Calixtus III, who ordered the Colonnas and the Caetanis to make their peace and turn their belligerent activities towards the Turks, their mutual foes.

On the twelfth of January, 1458, in the Castle of Sermoneta, a solemn pact was signed between all the Colonnas and the Caetanis, to secure peace for poor Italy. Cardinal Prospero Colonna pledged himself for his brothers and all his relations, and Onorato Caetani did likewise for his, and both sealed the parchment with

their signet rings. They all solemnly swore to have the same friends and the same enemies and the same ideas about right and wrong.

However, they were saved from a dull life in following years by fighting with everybody else from the Popes downwards, and still kept Rome in a perpetual state of civil war. In 1485, they signed yet another pact in which the two families promised to stand together against the hated Orsinis!

Another marriage between them took place in 1490, when Sveva's granddaughter, Caterina Colonna, married Antonio Caetani, and after another seventy years we come to the marriage to which I have already referred elsewhere: that of Onorato Caetani and Agnesina Colonna in 1560, which is of particular interest to me as it is the last one that took place between a Caetani man and a Colonna woman before my own in 1901.

This Onorato Caetani IV, from whom my own son Onorato descends in a direct line, was Capitano Generale della Fanteria Pontificia and as such fought at the famous battle of Lepanto against the Turks under the orders of his brother-in-law Marcantonio Colonna, who was Commandante Pontificio and commanded the Pope's galleys. Onorato and Agnesina loved each other tenderly, and while he was away fighting the Infidels she sat in the Castle of Sermoneta anxiously waiting for news. He wrote to her directly after the battle of Lepanto, a gay, manly letter that is still preserved in the Caetani archives, dated October 10th, 1571:

Through Messer Pietro Riccardi your Ladyship will learn all the particulars of our victory, for which we

must render the greatest thanks possible to God as it has really been the work of His powerful hand. I am the gayest and the most contented man in the world. We are bringing your Ladyship the most beautiful Turkish slaves that have ever been seen, and the principal nobles and ladies of Nicosia that we were able to secure. The day before yesterday thirteen Turkish galleys that still survive fled before four of our own, which shows to what extent these dogs have lost their courage.

The Count of Pliego is being sent by Don Juan of Austria to give an account of all this to his Holiness; he has promised to spend a night at Sermoneta on the way. Your Ladyship I know will not fail to honor him as much as possible. I kiss her hand, desiring to see her again soon and right merrily. I bless the babes and send messages to all in the house, and also to the vassals.

Possibly Count di Pliego might also wish to lodge at Cisterna. Your Ladyship had better let them know.

Signor Marcantonio is very well and very happy, and one can say he has been greatly the cause of this victory.

When the war was over and Onorato returned to Sermoneta, Agnesina came down the hill to meet him, and on the spot where they first embraced, Onorato built a chapel in which later he was buried, and which still exists.

Forty-odd years ago the chapel was broken into by robbers who stole the fine sixteenth century bronzes of Onorato's tomb. My father-in-law, the late Duke Onorato, told me he identified them some years later in a London museum, but apparently he took no steps in the matter, which is to be regretted, for if he had claimed them at the time they might have been restored to the family.

Agnesina Colonna Caetani, who died before her husband, was buried in the old church of St. Peter's, and her beautiful tombstone, engraved in the Colonna and the Caetani arms, can still be seen down in the crypt among the many monuments that belonged to the former church and were removed when the present basilica was built.

In another chapter I have told the story of the last assassination of a Caetani by a Colonna, and with that I think I have given a sufficiently good idea of the feud between the family I was born into, and the one to which my son belongs.

When I married in 1901, my father-in-law's property was the largest *united* one in Italy, for only the Torlonias (a family of French origin that dates from the Napoleonic times) owned a vaster acreage than he did, but divided up among several estates. The Caetani possessions were still those acquired by Pope Boniface VIII, over seven hundred years ago. They began near the town of Velletri and stretched down to the sea on one side including Foce Verde and Fogliano as far as Monte Circeo, and on the other side spread along the chain of the Lepini Mountains, past the town and castle of Sermoneta, down towards Terracina on the road to Naples. It was more in the nature of a small kingdom than a property. Numberless *guardiani* (keepers) and *butteri* (men who look after the horses and buffaloes) were employed by the Duke. They were probably the lineal descendants of our vassals of the Middle Ages. They wore a small metal shield engraved with the Caetani arms, sewn on the left side of their coats, and they were very devoted to the family. They rode wild, shaggy horses, on curious sad-

The lower terrace of the Colonna gardens, Rome

The bridges over the street, all the architectural features, the gardener's cottage, and the large pine tree, still exist

From an old print

The former Palazzo Orsini, now Palazzo Sermoneta

From an old print by Piranesi

dles called *bardelle,* and always carried a very long pole with which to round up the cattle.

When the Queen Mother came to stay with us at Fogliano in 1904, about fifty of these men escorted her, riding alongside her carriage, from the moment she entered the Caetani estates.

The town of Cisterna was more or less in the center of the domain, and it was there my husband lived, summer and winter, for several years of his life, before we met at Ninfa, when he personally managed all his father's property. There is an old Caetani palace in Cisterna with some fine frescoed rooms, but all very dark and dreary as it is situated in the midst of the town, with no garden of any sort.

After leaving Cisterna and traveling still many miles along the broad Roman road, one turned to the right and came to an uninhabited country of great prairies and forests and endless swamps and lakes that spread toward the sea. This part of the estate was known as Fogliano and it seemed incredible that such wild beauty should exist within a comparatively short distance of Rome. But it was only habitable in the winter and early spring, for as soon as summer set in the whole of the land was poisoned by malaria.

My father-in-law had built a house near the great sheet of water known as the Lake of Fogliano, to distinguish it from those of Paola and of Caprolace with which it communicated by many winding canals, hidden in the rushes. One could punt along all day through still waters overhung by giant trees and fringed with every sort of luxurious vegetation. The house itself was ugly but luckily unpretentious, and was chiefly used for shooting

parties, for the lakes and swamps were alive with wild duck.

On one side the Lake of Fogliano is separated from the sea only by sand dunes, and it is full of fish, the excellent *spigole* so much appreciated in my part of the world. Livy refers to Fogliano and its fish, that were well known to the ancient Romans, who had villas on the shores of the lake. There is a tombstone there of a Roman senator called Kamenio, who lived during the decline of the Roman Empire and was buried near Fogliano in 385 of our era.

The system of fishing in the lake had always been the same from the days of the Romans up to the death of my father-in-law; that is for two thousand years. What happens there now, alas, no Caetani knows, as I shall presently tell. The lake communicated with the sea by means of a narrow canal through the sand dunes. At certain times of the year the fish of the Tyrrenean Sea would swim up this canal in search of warmer and quieter waters, and then find themselves imprisoned in the lake by the very primitive but effective method of gates made of reeds. Enormous quantities were caught yearly and sent up to Rome to be sold in the fish market.

On the far side of the dunes the miles and miles of velvety sand that spread along the coast were the undisturbed possession of the Caetani family. The beauty of this golden shore, with its dark background of forest sloping down to the blue sea, was indescribable. In the far distance, on the left, rose the mountain lair of Circe, famous in mythological times, Monte Circeo, often referred to in the history of the Caetanis.

My father used to go to shooting parties at Fogliano in his younger days, and he told me how they had to ride on horseback for the last twenty miles or so through the marshes and forest, and gallop all the way so as not to be held up by the brigands who were still fairly common in that part of the country.

The first time I went to Fogliano was soon after my engagement to Leone Caetani, and then, as motor cars were still a great novelty and quite unreliable, we drove there from the station of Velletri, stopping at Cisterna to lunch and change horses. At that time it took practically all day to get from Rome to Fogliano, but it was already considered a great improvement to be able to drive for the last stage of the journey, and not be obliged to ride. A few years later, when both motor cars and the Fogliano road improved, it took only a couple of hours to get there.

On the occasion of my first visit we were quite a party, and spent several happy days there. My father, in the best of humors, as he approved highly of my marriage with the son of his old friend; my uncle, Prospero Colonna, my sister and her husband, Dudo Chigi, and all the Caetani brothers accompanied us. When I saw the forest of Fogliano, with the gigantic oak trees and the tall bracken that reminded me of my childhood in England, I felt I should love the place. I do not think I have ever seen a place that united so many attractions for a real country lover: the lake, the forest, the sea, and the endless grass plains. For sportsmen it was a regular Paradise, for the whole place teemed with wild fowl. Some years later I remember going to Fogliano with the American Ambassador, George Meyer, in his

motor car on a cold winter evening. When within a few miles of the place we stuck on the road up to our axles in mud, and had to be rescued by a *guardiano* driving a cart. The automobile spent the night in the Pontine Marshes with the very cross and rather frightened French chauffeur keeping guard over it, and was finally hauled out next morning by buffaloes.

These buffaloes are not to be confused with the long-horned oxen of Italy. The former can exist only in marshy lands as they have to wallow in water and mud to keep well, so they are bred only in the Pontine Marshes and, I think, on Prince Rospigliosi's estate at Maccarese. They are very fierce and it would be most dangerous to cross a field in which they are grazing. Their strength is enormous, and when they pull hard they go down on their knees to get more purchase. I used often to wonder why they gave themselves so much trouble, as they are never beaten or even touched with a stick by their keepers. These carry a long rod and walk in front of their team whose pace is always extremely slow. When the road is very bad, the man points with his rod to the best places and the buffaloes follow very carefully the line he gives them. They are wicked looking beasts, all black, with their great humped backs and evil little eyes; but they seem more intelligent than oxen, and are very obedient to their own *guardiano.*

I was told that each buffalo knows its own name, and when the man standing at the gate of the field calls it out, the animal at once leaves its companions and comes to him. The *guardiani* had a very curious old custom of naming a buffalo by a whole phrase, sometimes a proverb or a quotation from Dante. Livio Caetani told me he

once heard a buffalo called: *Belle-sono-le-donne-di-Cori!* (Beautiful are the women of Cori.)

Once a dead whale was washed up on the sands of Fogliano and it became imperative to drag the carcass ashore and dispose of it in some way. Several pairs of buffaloes were employed for the task, and between the weight of the whale and the strength of the buffaloes the iron chains snapped like threads, and special ones had to be forged.

It is sad to think I was fated to see so little of Fogliano. The place had no attraction for my husband, except for the shooting, as he never cared for the country purely for its beauties and pleasures. He preferred the old palace at Cisterna in the midst of the noisy village, from which he only emerged to give his orders to the many *guardiani* and *butteri* and then returned to his rooms to shut himself up all day long with his oriental books. I did not like to go to Fogliano by myself, as the Duchess spent a good deal of time there industriously planting rows and rows of palm trees, and countless round flower beds in the garden which she had made in front of the house, and I was made to feel that my visits were not welcome. I think the old Duke would have liked to have had me there, for he knew I listened to his stories and appreciated his jokes. But to avoid unpleasantness I went very little to Fogliano, though I always thought longingly of the beautiful place and hoped that some day it would be our country home.

The Castle of Sermoneta, which I have referred to so often in the story of the Colonna-Caetani feud, stands a long way from Fogliano. To reach it one turned to the left of the old Appian Way, and the road leads one past

beautiful Ninfa and then winds up through olive groves to the mountain tops where the town of Sermoneta and its castle stand. And now it is impossible not to make another incursion into history, for the story of the castle is one well worth telling.

As I have already said, Sermoneta and other territories were purchased in 1297 by Pope Boniface VIII from the Anibaldi family. In those early days the fortress was not as large as it is at present, but the great tower, called il Maschio to distinguish it from the smaller one, il Maschietto, was one story higher. It was eventually lowered by the Borgias, probably on account of its being so frequently struck by lightning. All that now remains of the original building are two towers, in which a few early Gothic frescoes remain, and some lovely Gothic windows, divided by slender columns. The great hall of "the barons" is also of this period, but was divided by the Borgias into many small rooms which have been left.

A great reception was given at Sermoneta in 1452 to the Emperor Frederic III by Onorato Caetani III. This same Onorato embellished the Castle with several new towers, walls, and apartments, most of which were destroyed by the Borgias later on. The great entrance hall, the *camere pinte* or painted rooms, and the enormous kitchen date from this period.

When the Borgia Pope Alexander VI came to the throne, the Caetani thought that a good time was coming for them, because the mother of the Pope's beautiful mistress, Giulia Farnese, was Giovanella Caetani. Instead of which, trouble arose at once. Alexander's cupidity was aroused and he soon managed to fall out with them, and

Cæsar Borgia and his troops rode out across the plains of the Campagna to lay siege to the castle of Sermoneta.

There was a terrible battle, for Guglielmo Caetani swore he would never give up the castle, and servants and vassals, inspired by his ardor, fought like lions. Even the women of the town donned armor and fought by the side of their men to defend the castle. But the Borgia forces were overwhelming and Sermoneta fell, while Guglielmo and his young sons managed to escape at the last moment. The children were taken in and hidden by various faithful peasants; Guglielmo's wife, Francesca, was harbored by her relations the Contis at Segni, Guglielmo himself found refuge at the court of Francesco Gonzago and Isabella d'Este at Mantova. It is said that he went there secretly and found employment breaking in the horses of Gonzaga's stud, and that one day Francesco's attention was attracted by the new man who managed to curb a particularly wild stallion that no one else could ride. When Francesco found out he was Guglielmo Caetani, in hiding from the Pope's vengeance, he treated him with every mark of friendliness and courtesy, and insisted on his remaining his guest till better times came.

The Caetanis were all excommunicated—they must have got used to it by then—and, what was worse, Sermoneta became a Borgia possession, most valuable to them as it was practically the key of the road to Naples. Alexander and Cæsar immediately began enlarging and improving the castle; fortifications were hurriedly constructed—not so solidly as the old ones—but splendidly thought out, with a complicated system of defenses and two drawbridges over a deep moat; the steep rocks them-

selves, on which the castle was built, helped to make it impregnable.

The Pope himself visited Sermoneta on July 31, 1501, to inspect all the works that were in progress, and he bestowed it, by means of a nominal sale, upon his daughter, Lucrezia Borgia, and her infant son Rodrigo. Cæsar, jealous of this favor shown to his sister, grumbled: "E donna, non lo potra mantener" (She is a woman, she will not be able to keep it), but for once the Pope did not heed him. Sermoneta was made a duchy, and Lucrezia Borgia was the first Duchessa di Sermoneta, while her small son was styled the Duca di Sermoneta. Before this time the head of the Caetani family, despite all the other ducal and princely titles he possessed, had called himself simply "Il Signore di Sermoneta." But Lucrezia lived very little at the castle, if at all, for her marriage with Alfonso d'Este was arranged for political reasons, and the rest of her life was spent at Ferrara, while Rodrigo remained in Rome under the guardianship of two Cardinals.

The Caetanis underwent terrible persecutions from the merciless Borgias, and the wonder is that the whole family was not exterminated. Giacomo Caetani was taken prisoner and poisoned after a long captivity. The boy Bernardino was discovered and killed near the walls of Sermoneta, and other members of the family came to violent ends. But Camillo, son of Guglielmo, was saved, and also his sister, Ersilia, who later married Enrico Orsini.

At the death of the Borgia Pope, all the great families of Rome who had been deprived of their possessions by him seized them once more, with the willing help of

their former vassals. One can imagine the great excitement when the news came that the brutal tyrant had breathed his last; the mad rush of all these princes, racing towards their former castles! The first to arrive at Sermoneta was Guglielmo's wife Francesca, from the neighboring Segni. She was joyfully received by the population, but the keeper of the castle still refused to let down the drawbridge. For Cæsar was still alive, though desperately ill, and the keeper was not yet quite convinced that the power of the Borgias was at an end.

Cæsar Borgia had laid all his plans for the eventual death of the Pope, and schemed everything in detail; the only complication he had never foreseen was that he might be dangerously ill at the same time as his father. Nevertheless, on his bed of pain he made a desperate effort not to lose Sermoneta, by making friendly propositions to the Colonnas. He arranged a marriage for Rodrigo Borgia, Duke of Sermoneta, aged six, with a damsel of the Colonna family, and for that reason Prospero Colonna rode hurriedly to Sermoneta and urged the population there to stick to young Borgia. He thought he had gained his point, and was very angry when, two or three days later, he heard that Sermoneta had welcomed Francesca Caetani. He addressed the notabilities of the town a letter full of threats, but could not stem the current.

Guglielmo Caetani arrived post haste from hospitable Mantova to join Francesca at Sermoneta. He was met thirty miles from the town by all the jubilant townsfolk, men, women, and children, who flung themselves upon their returning lord with such impetus that he and his steed were hurled to the ground.

The keeper of the castle realized that the game was up, so he let down the drawbridge, and Guglielmo Caetani, taking possession of his domain once more, was delighted to see all the improvements his enemies had made to it during his absence.

History is not very clear as to what happened to the unfortunate child who was the first Duke of Sermoneta. While his uncle Cæsar Borgia lay dying, he was carried by night from the Vatican to Castel Sant' Angelo, along the secret underground passage which existed at that time, and soon afterwards all trace of him was lost. Gregorovius states that he was taken to Naples to be educated, and probably died young. By the time Cæsar was well again, the Caetanis were firmly in possession of Sermoneta, and the other great families had also recovered their lands, so, as every one knows, he fled to Spain and died there fighting.

Sermoneta remained as the Borgias had left it, and has been practically untouched ever since. Unfortunately the French troops occupied it in 1798, and while they flew the flag of liberty from the tower they sacked the castle and looted its precious armory. Tradition says that before the French arrived, the Duke of Sermoneta threw open the gates of the castle and invited the people of the town to take what they pleased, as he would rather see his possessions in the hands of the Sermonetani than destroyed by the French. This is probably true, because not a stick of furniture was left in Sermoneta; the cannons were taken away, and the place was abandoned.

Thirty-five years ago the castle, utterly deserted, was almost a ruin. Ivy climbed all over it, the vast courtyard was so choked with weeds that it was almost impossible

to enter it, trees grew on the ramparts, and the Maschio, repeatedly struck by lightning, was in a badly damaged condition. The people of the village believed that a terrible dragon lived in the subterranean dungeons, and no one dared go to the castle after nightfall.

It is entirely due to my husband's younger brother Gelasio that Sermoneta has been saved from utter ruin. He was the first Caetani for many generations to take an interest in the place or to visit it at all. He studied the plans of the castle according to ancient documents in the archives, at the same time as he was compiling the history of the family, and, bringing his knowledge of engineering into use, put the place into a fairly good state of repair.

None of us, except Gelasio, has ever stayed at Sermoneta, but I often went there in the old days with a merry party of friends for picnics, leaving Rome in the morning in several automobiles and returning at sunset through the Campagna. It is a lovely run of about two hours, through Albano, Ariccia, Genzano, Velletri, and Ninfa. When people used to ask my father-in-law's permission to visit the Castle of Sermoneta, he would answer courteously, "Certainly, pray go by all means. I only regret I cannot offer you luncheon, but our cook at Sermoneta died at the end of the sixteenth century."

Sermoneta is a gigantic and impressive pile, with its drawbridges and big iron entrance doors all dented and pierced by the countless pikes and other weapons that have attacked them in the past. Stone cannon balls still lie about the courtyard. There are many dark dungeons in which poor prisoners have languished and left touching inscriptions on the walls. In one of them the reader

is advised, when he hears the name of Caetani, to fly as though it were the devil, for they had kept him a prisoner there for thirty years! Near the dungeons is the torture chamber, which one reaches after going down many dark steps, and it is still fitted up with pulleys and iron rings ready for its victims. There is a vast stable with stone mangers for over a hundred horses, and many human skeletons have been dug up in various parts of the courtyard. Hours can be spent exploring the Castle with its countless halls and passages without ever getting to the end of its grim secrets.

But the greatest tragedy of the Caetani family is still to be told.

When the old Duke Onorato died, my husband sold all the vast possessions he had inherited and that had belonged to the Caetanis for over seven centuries, and his example was followed by his brothers, Roffredo and Michelangelo, who also disposed of the part that belonged to them. That night Pope Boniface VIII must have turned in his grave.

Gelasio alone was faithful to his ancestors and kept intact his comparatively small share of the property—Ninfa and some adjoining land. He lives there a good deal, spending his time improving the place and writing his great history of the Caetani family; but it must be heartrending for him to be isolated in the midst of strangers, and to know that all the other familiar landmarks have now passed into other hands.

Fogliano was purchased by a business syndicate, hailing from the north of Italy, who immediately cut down every tree on the estate—the giant oaks of centuries—most of

which were left rotting on the ground for lack of means of transport. I am told that that fair land is now a barren desert, unrecognizable by those who knew it in the old days. Please God I may never see it again.

The only family possession that the Caetani have kept is the empty and deserted Castle of Sermoneta, standing like a lonely sentinel there on its hill overlooking the vast tract of land that spreads from the mountains to the sea. From here Pope Boniface VIII must have gazed across the Pontine Marshes and said proudly: "All I behold is mine."

Do the last Caetanis ever recall the motto painted on the wall in one of the empty halls of Sermoneta:

Mal fa chi tanto cosi presto oblia?

CHAPTER XVI

SADDER DAYS

IT was in September of 1917 that my father-in-law, who had been in failing health for over a year, finally became much worse, and as the end seemed very near, my husband telegraphed to me to return to Rome. The old Duke died in the Villa Torlonia on the Via Nomentana, which the family had taken for the summer months, so that he should have fresher air than down in the gloomy Palazzo Caetani.

He had often been unfair and rather mean towards me, but I have always attributed this to other influences brought to bear on him, and liked him all the same, as I enjoyed his agreeable and cultivated conversation, while his dry wit amused me intensely. He never forgave my husband his political opinions that were different from his own, and this created a certain coldness between them during the last years of his life.

When his will was read it was found to be a very unjust one for my husband, who was now, of course, the head of the family, and entirely favored his second son, Roffredo Caetani, who was my mother-in-law's favorite and who had made his home in France with his American wife. Fortunately my husband now came into possession of the fortune left him in trust by his grandfather, the old blind Duke Michelangelo, or else we would have been in a very bad way. Violent quarrels broke out in the family, between the Dowager Duchess, my husband,

his three brothers, and his sister, that were quite medieval in their fierceness. Of course my sympathies were entirely with my husband, who I think was treated very hardly all round; but as quarrels make me physically ill I wished to keep out of it all, so retired again to the green solitude of my little island. The months passed, December came and the snow fell; I stayed on as long as I could, but I nearly died of the cold.

Meanwhile my husband's letters were full of the iniquities of his family. I finally moved to the comparative comfort of the Hotel Continental at Milan, where at least the rooms were warmed.

Those were terribly anxious days, when things seemed to be going very badly at the front, and Milan was full of gloom. The War was the only subject of conversation, and alarming reports were being spread by the pessimists.

When I felt I could bear it no more I returned to Rome and found the Caetani family on a very original footing. They all lived in the same house, but most of them were not on speaking terms; however, they all *kissed* whenever they met. This really cheered me up, for I hadn't found anything to laugh at for a very long time!

It was very lucky for me that my husband shared my dislike for Palazzo Caetani. He had never been at his ease there, even as a boy, and though he never cared for comfort or beautiful houses as I did, he had always vaguely felt that one's home ought to be organized differently. Besides which, Palazzo Caetani was not at all an old family possession, having belonged to the Caetani for only the last hundred years, so he had no feeling about leaving it. The real family mansion used to be what is now the present Palazzo Ruspoli in the Corso, so I am

told. The Caetanis in the Middle Ages and Renaissance were very little in Rome, unlike the Colonnas who always had their stronghold there where the Palazzo Colonna still stands. They lived nearly always on their estates in the Pontine Marshes, between Cisterna and Sermoneta.

So my husband told me that if I could find some house in Rome that I liked better he was willing for us to buy it, and he would then let his brother Roffredo have the Palazzo Caetani for himself. I eagerly started searching Rome at once, longing for a home I could get fond of.

My first idea was to find some large grounds in which I could indulge my passion for gardening. But this was not easy: where there was sufficient land there was no suitable house, and Villa Celimontana, with which I fell in love, belonged to Austrians, now of course enemies, with whom one could not treat.

It was an old friend of mine, Rino Solinas, who finally said to me, after we had driven round Rome disconsolately for several days, "Why don't we go and see Palazzo Orsini?"

It was just round the corner from Palazzo Caetani, situated in the oldest part of Rome, and curiously enough I had never been inside it. I shrieked at the idea, saying it was in the Ghetto, surrounded by old houses and that I was sick to death of gloomy palaces anyhow. But Rino Solinas insisted on taking me to look at it, and I have blessed him for it ever since.

And now I have a hard task before me, for Palazzo Orsini—now known as Palazzo Sermoneta—is the most difficult house in the world to describe, as it is certainly the most original. When American friends say to me, "Is your house in Rome very old?" and I answer, "The

greater part of it was built before Jesus Christ was born," they think I am joking. But it is a fact. Piranesi's print, engraved about two hundred years ago, gives a very accurate view of it as it now appears from the Piazza Montanara side.

The two lower stories, on that side of the house, are merely gigantic Roman arches, the remains of the theater built by the Emperor Augustus in memory of his favorite nephew Marcellus. It was considered one of the glories of Imperial Rome and justified Augustus's proud saying: "I found a city of clay and have left one of marble." With the fall of the Roman Empire and the invasion of the barbarians, the Theater of Marcellus gradually became a ruin, though it continued to be used for public spectacles until the fifth century. The early Christians proved even more destructive than the barbarians, for they overthrew and broke up the statues that adorned it, under the impression that they were false gods, and the population used the vast building as a quarry to provide the material for rebuilding their homes that the barbarians had destroyed. Thus part of the outer semicircle of arches disappeared altogether. Rank weeds and wild fig trees grew on the marble stairs up which the Roman senators, the vestal virgins, and other privileged classes had proudly passed, moving towards their reserved seats, and at flood time the waters of the Tiber lapped under its stately portico. These were the Dark Ages for all Rome.

It was towards the year 1000 that the Pierleoni, a family that is now extinct, realized that the ruins of the Theater of Marcellus formed an admirable strategic position and took undisputed possession of them, building on the top a fortress flanked with towers, strongly fortified, and with

an entrance turned towards the Tiber. It is curious to note that the Pierleoni were of Jewish origin, yet one of them became Pope under the name of Anacleto II and, his family having annexed the Marcellus ruin, his papal residence was for some time in the middle of the Ghetto. It was in this fortress of the Pierleoni that Pope Gregory VII took refuge during his struggle with Henry IV in 1075.

In the year 1200 it passed into the hands of the Savelli, one of the great baronial families which has now died out. A hundred odd years later, Petrarch was the first to protest against the decay in which the great monuments of the Roman Empire had fallen and specially mentions the Teatro di Marcello.

The Savelli retained possession of the Roman ruin and the edifice that crowned it for several centuries, and gradually the fortress became less forbidding and more in the nature of a private dwelling. But it was in 1515 that the famous Renaissance architect, Baldassare Peruzzi, transformed the superstructure, harmonizing the top stories with the Roman arches underneath. Later on the Orsinis became possessors of the Palazzo Savelli, as it was then called. and further alterations took place, but the main features remained the same. The entrance then, as now, was always on the side of the Tiber, where the ruins, gradually buried by the soil, formed a steep hill, and an avenue which still exists led up to the *piazzale* in front of the main door, which is really on the level of the second tier of Roman arches on the other side of the house.

A hundred years ago, in 1828, Stendahl visited the spot and thus describes it in his book on Rome:

As our desire to admire antiquities still continues, we have been to visit the ruins of the beautiful Theatre of Marcellus. He was the nephew of Augustus, immortalized by some verses of Virgil beginning, *Tu Marcellus eris,* which the great poet read in the presence of Octavia when she had just lost that most amiable of sons. . . . Ten years after the death of Marcellus, Augustus had the Theatre inaugurated. The Romans had the pleasure of seeing killed under their eyes six hundred wild beasts, and the curule chair of Augustus unexpectedly broke and he fell on his back, which gave much pleasure to the old Jacobins of Rome.

If you can manage to forget the enormous roof which is so ungraceful, the façade can give you an idea of what remains of the Theatre of Marcellus. This edifice formed a semicircle of the diameter of 370 feet, and it could contain 25,000 spectators. All that remains now are two stories of elegant arches that face Piazza Montanara. The columns of the lower order are Doric and the upper ones are Ionic.

This beautiful ruin is such a joy to the eye that the greater number of architects when they have to superimpose the Ionic upon the Doric orders, follow the proportions of the Theatre of Marcellus. Probably there was a third order still higher up. [In this I believe Stendhal was wrong: archæologists have told me that there never was another tier of arches.]

In twenty years' time, when we shall be less barbaric in architectural matters, they will probably add this third order, and the ugly roof will then be hidden. The Theatre of Marcellus is built with great blocks of travertine. Like all the more solid monuments of Ancient Rome, it served as a fortress in the Middle Ages. . . . Prince Orsini, the actual proprietor, has now had it restored. One arrives in the court of the palace by a long winding ave-

nue that passes over the elevation formed by the ruins of the old Theatre.

It is curious to note how taste changes with every succeeding generation. The Peruzzi superstructure, which we consider an admirable product of genius, was stigmatized by Stendhal as an enormous and ungraceful *roof,* and he would have preferred a third tier of modern arches, aping the old ones, to complete the façade!

When Solinas escorted me to view the Palazzo Orsini, I fell at once before its charm as soon as I entered its gates and passed up the avenue of tall plane trees. The palace was in a bad state of repair and all divided up into many apartments, but I realized at once its immense possibilities. There were frescoed halls of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, beautiful ceilings, old majolica floors of quaint designs, quattrocento doorways still engraved with the names of the Savelli, a tiny circular room all decorated with exquisite old tiles and, best of all, two inner gardens, one of which I decided at once would be my very own, for it contained seven splashing fountains, flower beds with old stone borders, and many orange trees laden with their golden fruit.

My mind was at once made up, and I went home to tell my husband of my find. He was not at all enthusiastic and made the same objections that I had done before viewing the house; but I persuaded him to come and see it with me, and then he, too, realized its charm and its possibilities. What finally decided him was when he found out that by knocking four rooms into one, he would have the most marvelous of libraries, situated between the avenue and the inner garden. As a matter of

The castle and town of Sermoneta overlooking the Pontine Marshes

fact, it had originally been one room, and when later on this work was done, we discovered a beautiful old ceiling and part of a very interesting frieze of dancing cherubs.

A few months later we became possessors of Palazzo Orsini and I at once began working very hard to make it habitable.

We both left Palazzo Caetani without regret. As I passed out of its somber portals I had a last vision of a melancholy workman carrying a pot of paint, and a perspiring underling struggling with a ladder. Much strange wreckage was strewn about the dusty courtyard and for the last time I heard the raucous voice shouting orders from a top window. Palazzo Caetani, in the Street of the Dark Shops, was still in the state of chaos that I had found when I entered it for the first time as a bride, and it is probably still continuing at the present moment.

In the autumn of 1918 I was on my island and decided to go from there to Paris. This entailed some energy, for traveling was more difficult than ever. Instead of comfortably catching the Orient Express, which now stops once more at the station of Pallanza—as it did before the War—I had to make a very different journey. I remember getting up at four in the morning in pitch darkness and being rowed ashore to Pallanza in torrents of rain. There I had to take the train to Pallanza station, as *women and children* were no longer allowed to use motor cars in Italy, and from there the train to Turin with two changes on the way and no porters to help one with the luggage. Then an awful new rule had been made: sleeping car berths could not be booked on the same day

as they were required, so I had no idea how long I would have to stay in Turin before I could secure a place for the night journey. I was really rather lucky, as next day by bribing the hall porter to be the first in the queue when the office opened, I was able to get one for that evening.

I arrived in a Paris such as I had never seen, for I had not been there in war-time: unlighted, without means of conveyance, and full of men and women all in uniform. But even then it had not the austerity of London and the large towns in the north of Italy. There was a silly joke going round that rather aptly described the occupation of most of the officers one saw: "Are you married or single or in Paris on leave?"

Peace still seemed far away, though rumors were circulating as to the bad condition of the Germans and Austrians. But then the optimists had said all that in the autumn of 1914!

Then on the fourth of November came the telegram giving General Diaz's splendid bulletin, with the account of the total defeat of the Austrians. I cried when I read it: 300,000 prisoners, 5,000 cannons taken, the Austro-Hungarian Army destroyed, and the War won! Besides the glory for us, it meant the beginning of the end of all this misery in Europe.

Those were exciting days and events moved quickly; but as ill luck would have it I fell ill and had to take to my bed at the Ritz. Friends were very kind in not leaving me alone and all day long some one or other was rushing in or out of my room to give me the latest news. Admiral (Andrew) Long, of the United States Navy, who had been naval attaché in Rome for several

years, was staying on my floor, and I saw a good deal of him.

When on November eleventh the Armistice was declared, Paris went mad, and I was too ill to go out and see the sights! My friends pulled my bed up to the window, so that I could see the crowds dancing in Place Vendôme. Men and women, hand in hand, made huge rings, and whenever foreign officers or soldiers passed they captured them and danced round them; these retaliated by kissing every girl within reach! The people took the German cannons that had been lined up in the Champs Elysées and dragged them all over Paris; when they got tired they just left them wherever they happened to be, so it was a hard job next day to collect them all again.

Late in the afternoon an American officer, Perry Osborne, with whom I had made friends, came into my room in a state of exhaustion; he had danced all the way from the Arc de Triomphe to Place de la Concorde. He said that the crowd formed up in rows of about forty abreast, all arm-in-arm, and they danced a sort of mazurka step right down the Champs Elysées, singing at the tops of their voices. He said they had caught hold of him and made him go too, but I think he had been a willing victim. He certainly hadn't any voice left! I'm sure I would have loved it. No one who has not been through it all can realize what the intense feeling of relief was: it seemed as though all our troubles were at an end. I was very busy when I returned to Rome after all the excitement of armistice week in Paris, as I had an enormous amount of work to do in the ex-Palazzo Orsini before it was ready for us to live in. The

War was over, and at last I had a beautiful house of my own, the home of my dreams, so perfectly Roman in every detail and yet so full of comfort.

Does it not sound like the end of a fairy tale?

But life is not a fairy tale, and some impish spirit nearly always interferes and mixes all the threads again with diabolical delight. I found I was destined to live alone with my son in the beautiful home I had arranged with such loving care; our freedom and my husband's fortune had come into our lives too late for our joint happiness.

It is a curious coincidence that Vittoria Colonna should have married Leone Caetani and made her home in the former Palazzo Orsini; for only three of the great baronial families that had vowed each other such undying hatred during the Middle Ages in Rome have survived throughout the centuries, and they are the Orsini, the Caetani, and the Colonna.

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